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Hemen Mazumdar: The last romantic

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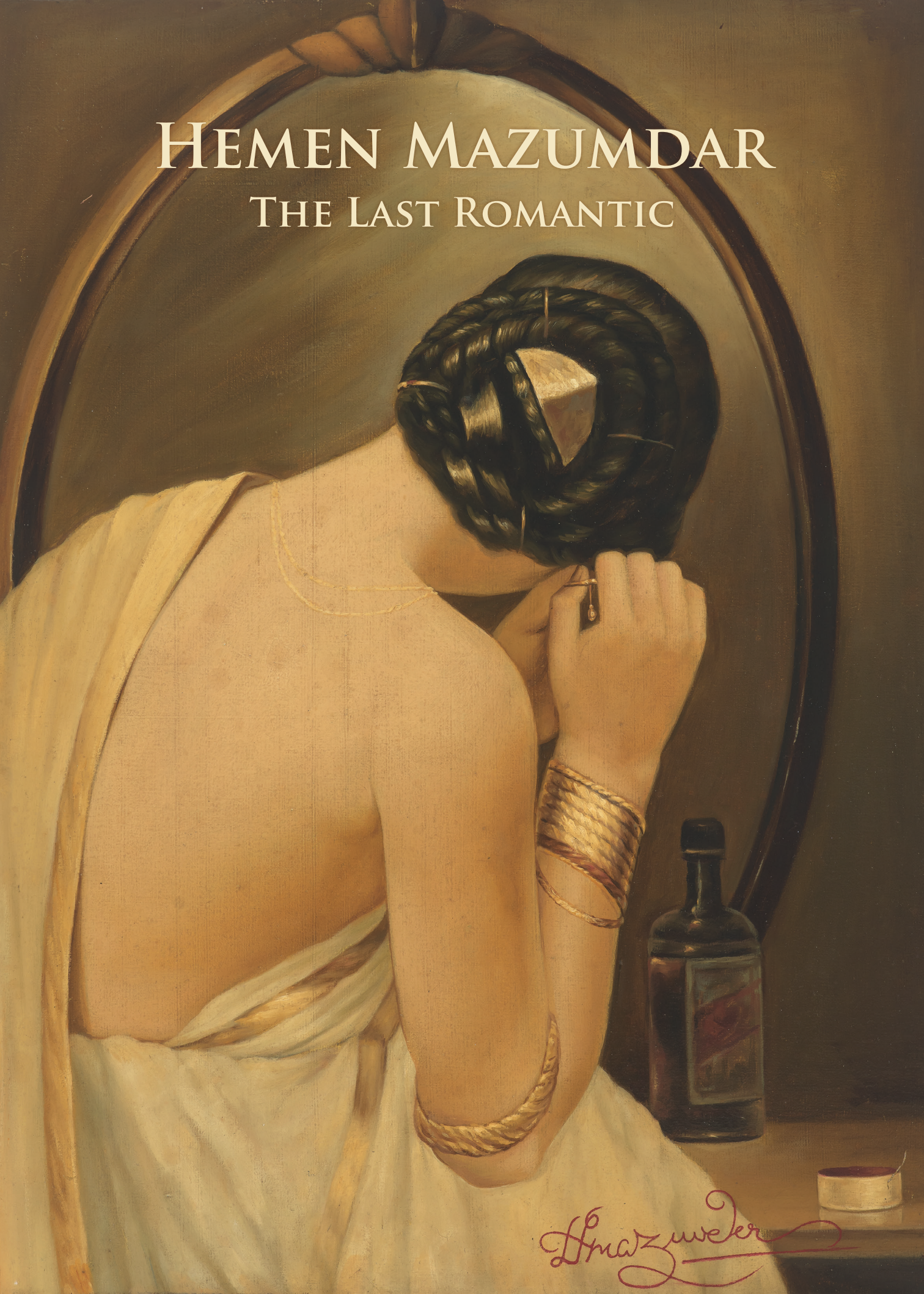
Hemen Mazumdar

The Last Romantic



"There are no fixed rules or traditions in the domain of painting,
which has got no universally recognized lexicon of its own"

Hemen Mazumdar
The Last Romantic

Edited by
Caterina Corni
Nirmalya Kumar

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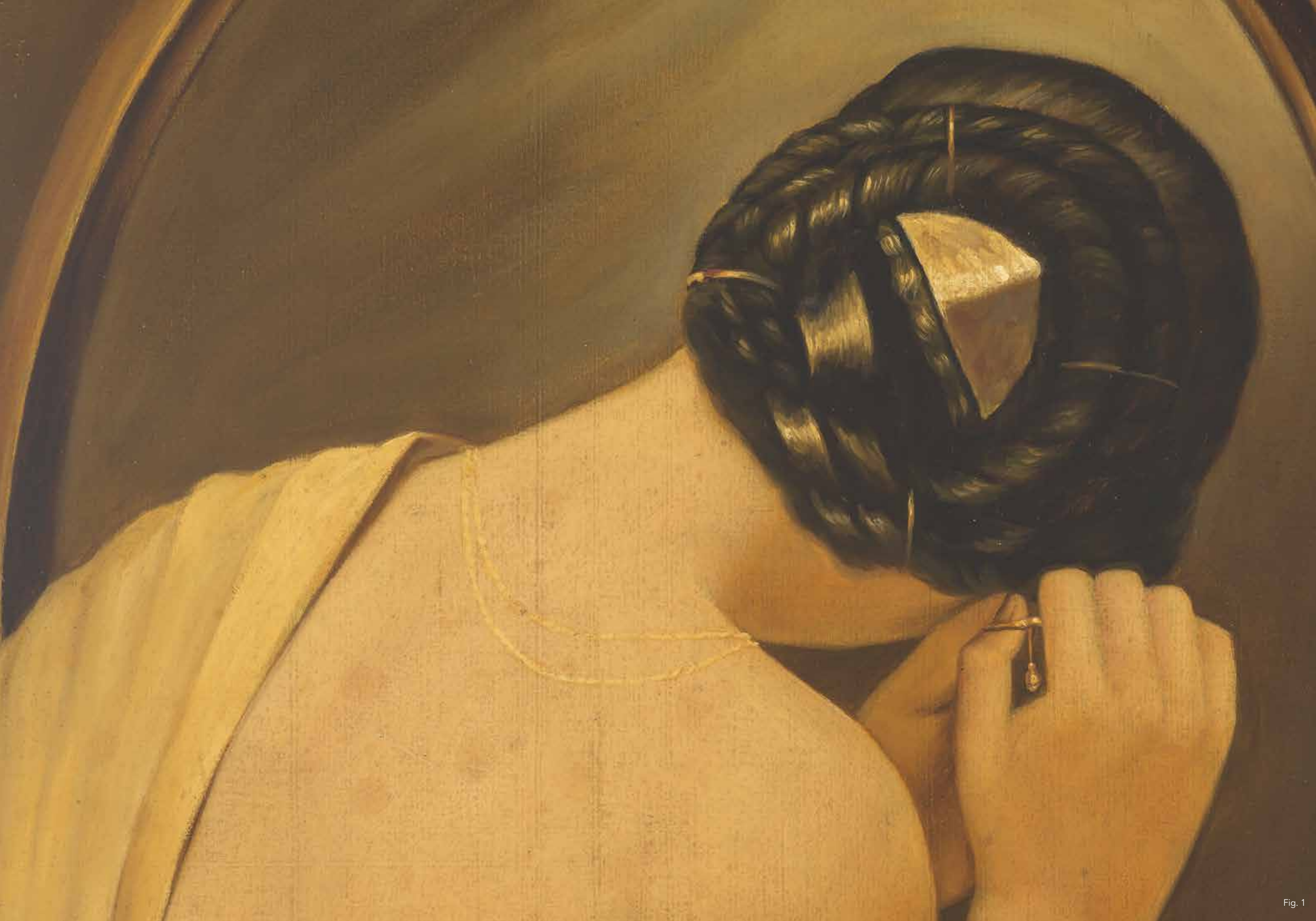

Fig. 1

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BIOGRAPHY

"Hemen Mazumdar had devoted his entire artistic life to a battle against vision of the Old Bengal School, in favour of a universal language of art".

Hemendranath Mazumdar, popularly referred to as Hemen Mazumdar, was born 1894 in Gachihata village of Mymensingh district, which is currently part of Bangladesh. Coming from a relatively wealthy landowning family, at the age of sixteen, Hemen dropped out of school and ran away to Calcutta to pursue his passion for painting. His early exposure to art seems to have been entirely through illustrations that appeared in magazines and books.

Appearing at the doorstep of his sister's home in Calcutta, after futile attempts to dissuade him to pursue his dream of being an artist, he enrolled at the Government College of Art in 1911. The Government College of Art that Hemen entered had undergone a remarkable transformation over the previous fifteen years. It had evolved from an institution "established by a benevolent government for the purpose of revealing to the Indians the superiority of European art."[1] Under the successive leadership of Ernest Havell, Abanindranath Tagore, and Percy Brown, the college had moved away from mandating students to copy western academic art as part of their training to espousing Indian art as the basis of the curriculum.

Frustrated by abandonment of western academic tenets in instruction, Hemen left Government College of Art in 1912 for another institution in the city. Jubilee Art Academy was sympathetic to academic naturalism, but Hemen was more self-taught with the help of art books he sourced from overseas. By 1915, he left Jubilee Art Academy to start earning his living through portrait painting.

Abanindranath Tagore's coterie had banished any artist following the western academic approach. In response, in 1919, Hemen Mazumdar with Atul Bose and Jamini Roy, established The Indian Academy of Fine Arts. In 1920, the first issue of the journal *Indian Art Academy* appeared to showcase art of those following academic naturalism.

The 1920s helped establish Hemen Mazumdar as a major Indian artist with a national reputation. Starting in 1920, Hemen won the gold medal at the annual exhibition of Bombay Art Society for three consecutive years. His paintings, such as Pallipran, also won awards at exhibitions in Calcutta and Madras. Between 1920-24, the five-volume set, *The Art of Mr. H. Mazumdar*, was published. By then, Hemen paintings appeared regularly in various magazines and periodicals. To popularise his art, Hemen published in album of paintings entitled *Indian Masters* edited by A.M.T. Acharya in 1920s and launched a new art journal *Shilpi* in 1929.

1 - William G. Archer, India and Modern Art

Hemen Mazumdar
Biography

From 1930, for the rest of his life, Hemen Mazumdar remained a celebrated Indian artist. His popularity attracted the attention of Indian royalty. Among his patrons were Maharajas of Bikaner, Cooch Behar, Dholpur, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Kashmir, Kotah, Mayurbhanj, and Patiala. At each of these courts, he painted the portraits of the royal family, and on their requests, his most famous paintings of solitary Bengali women such as Ear-Ring (Kaner-Dul), Image (Roop), Monsoon (Barsha), Secret Memory (Smriti) and Soul of the Village (Pallipran). This royal connection reinforced his national stature as an artist.

After the death of Maharaja of Patiala in 1938, Hemen returned to Bengal. He set up studios in Calcutta as well as the Dhiren Studio in Hooghly district under the patronage of the local zamindar. After participating in the All India Exhibition at Eden Gardens, Calcutta, Hemen Mazumdar died on 22 July 1948.

He had devoted his entire artistic life to a battle against vision of the "Old Bengal School" led by Abanindranath Tagore, in favour of a universal language of art. In his article, Cobwebs of the Fine Arts World, appearing just prior to his death, Hemen Mazumdar wrote that the inability of the Bengal School to draw is camouflaged by their assertion of a 'spiritual' world beyond appearances.[2]

With Jamini Roy and Rabindranath Tagore, Hemen Mazumdar pioneered the emergence of "modern Indian art" through their respective competing visions steeped in Indian folk art, expressionism, and western academic style. This tripartite legacy endures even today in Indian visual art.

2 - Appeared in the catalogue of All India Exhibition (Delhi c 1947, p.xiv) as noted by Partha Mitter in Triumph of Modernism

BY MR. HEMEN MAZUMDAR

Few people have got any idea as to how a picture is made in the studio of an artist, what a considerable amount of skill, labour and application is brought to bear upon his subject by the artist before it is permanently fixed upon the canvas. The immortals of the past who have given to the world their 'masterpieces' representing the hard toil and devotion of a lifetime – well, how many of us know anything about the history of the birth of these master-paintings that have been the wonder and admiration of generations of men through the ages? The buyers or the public only see the finished thing when it has come out of the studio of the artist. But what do they know or care about the terrible spell diligence, perseverance and patience that has gone to its making?

Just as the imaginative faculties and pictures of different artists have got different characteristics, so their art or technique is also not the same. In this matter every individual artist has got his own peculiar tastes and idiosyncrasies and, of course, his own modus operandi. But in spite of this outward difference in method or treatment, one can discern a certain unity or community of spirit in the things that really matter in the pictures of all masters, past and present. As in the world of music, we have different masters with different styles of rendering, while the really big things like harmonies and melodies etc. remain the same, so among artists also we come across a certain definite standard in the matter of broad items like light, shade, composition, brush technique and so forth, which, in spite of minor differences in details, cannot be despised by any. To put it more clearly, I should say that in the work of all great artists there are to be found clear traces of the stamp of genius which can be easily recognized by the keen eye of a true artist, although the latter may not follow that particular line of painting at all in his own case.

It has already been remarked that there are no hard and fast rules or methods of universal application in the matter of painting a picture. However, I have tried to give below some idea of the general lines that are ordinarily followed by most artists for the sake of convenience while engaged on a picture.

First of all comes the conception or the mental process of fixing upon a suitable subject-matter. Let us suppose that an artist has set his mind on drawing a beggar. He will then think out for himself as to how best to give shape to his mental image of the beggar; that is to say, what particular pose will bring out the inherent beggarliness of his subject to the best advantage. Here, of course, the conception of the ideal beggar is determined by the range and sweep of imaginative faculties of particular artists. Anyway, the artist will now draw up a pencil sketch of the beggar of his imagination together with the desired pose. This may be called the second stage. The next or the third step would be to look out for an actual beggar approximating in physical features to the ideal beggar that has already been mentally drawn by the artist. This is called the 'model' in the language of art. But it is always difficult to get hold of a model that would come up to the ideal standard of the artist; for, to the latter, any mendicant that comes along is not a beggar. Brinjals are generally of a violet colour; but you could buy any number of them in the market of the green variety also. To the artist, however, these latter are not brinjals at all. Anyhow, whoever strikes you are a genuine mendicant at the very first sight, the artist will call him a beggar, even if he does not happen to be actually begging at the time.

Now, when a fairly satisfactory model has been found after diligent search, the artist sets about making a perfect outline drawing of the sketch that he had already drawn up in pencil, through the help of this model. Then he introduces light and shade, drawing the picture in monochrome, e.g. chalk, charcoal, pencil, etc. The help of the model is necessary for the purpose of achieving anatomical perfection. And, to this end, many artists prefer to make a nude study of the model first and then go in for drapery. In this fourth stage, the artist as a rule does not draw upon his imagination but makes a faithful study of the model, although, in the long run, he gives to the picture the tone and character of the ideal beggar of his original conception.

We are here talking of two beggars, on real (i.e., the model) and the other ideal (i.e., the one in the artist's imagination). The artist is, of course, out to draw an ideal beggar. And the real representation of the latter in flesh and blood helps him to achieve the perfect idea. For there can be no ideal absolutely divorced from the real; just as in drawing Krishna or Jesus, we have to give a sort of superhuman shape and character to the figure of a mere man.

Fifthly, when the realistic study of the beggar is finished, the artist draws the surroundings or environments, i.e., the dwelling-place of the beggar etc., be it a hovel, a footpath or a thicket, in order to complete the picture. And just to be able to do this, the artist has to go to a field sometimes, stand in the streets at others and, perhaps, take a trip to a remote village on occasion to get the picture of a typical hut etc. All this trouble and travail the artist has to go through before he can hope to make the things of his heart live for us all upon the canvas.

The sixth or the last stage consists in painting the picture afresh in large size from that original sketch, by putting all the part studies together and incorporating them into a beautiful and finished whole.

Now the question may arise – What is the good of taking so much trouble? Why not get hold of a suitable beggar, snap him and then put the colours on the photograph? No, the thing is certainly not so simple as that. Had it been so, all photographers would have been famous artists by this time! If you take the photograph of a beggar, you will probably find that in spite of his dirty rags and tatters, there is really no expression of genuine beggarliness in his face. And then in the photograph, he will almost always stand in a very ordinary, unsuggestive way, while the artist will make him stand in a pose which will reflect his utter helplessness and indigence as if in a mirror. If the beggar in the photograph conveys the impression that the man simply begs, the artist's beggar will make you realize at once what grim poverty is in all its nakedness!

By way of illustrating my theme in this short article, I have appended herewith a few original studies in stages of my picture "Shilpi". And I trust the reader will be able to understand something of the making of a picture from these illustrations.

It has been said already that there are no fixed rules or traditions in the domain of painting, which has got no universally recognized lexicon of its own. While drawing angels or nymphs flying through the air, some artists would put their models on springs and hang them in space and then make a realistic study of their speed, pose etc. Again there are others who would finish this same business by simply laying their models to bed in any desired posture. The person who makes a lot of fuss about his model and procures a costly one after a good deal of patient search, pretty often makes nothing of it; while the unostentatious artist taking his sittings in a quiet sort of way from a not very spectacular model, finishes by making a high-grade picture of his humble material. Thus in the last resort it all depends upon the individual capacity of the artist concerned. There are, of course, styles and styles. But nothing is so important as the training, temperament and native genius of the artist himself.

"DRAWING IS THE LIFE AND SOUL OF PAINTING."—

Fig. 1—IMAGINATIVE SKETCH
The finished painting is in the collection of H. H. The Maharaja of Mourbhanj

Fig. 2—IMAGINATIVE SKETCH
(Different pose)
The finished painting is in the collection of Sir R. N. Mookerjee, K.C.I.E., K.C.V.O.

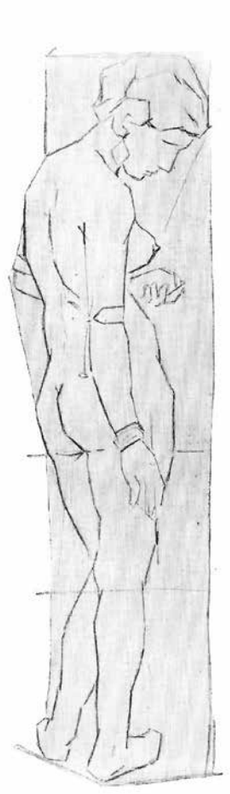

Fig. 3—DRAWING FROM LIFE
(Nude study)

Fig. 4—DRAPERY STUDY

Fig. 5—PUTTING ON LIGHT & SHADE

'SHILPI' By Mr. H. MAZUMDAR
(Finished study in colour.)

Originally published in Shilpi, The Indian Academy of Art, Calcutta, 1929.

"There is a perfect balance between the divine and earthly dimension in Hemen Mazumdar's works, which emerges from a very personal poetic vision that creates a new and singular aesthetic".

C. Corni

Works

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

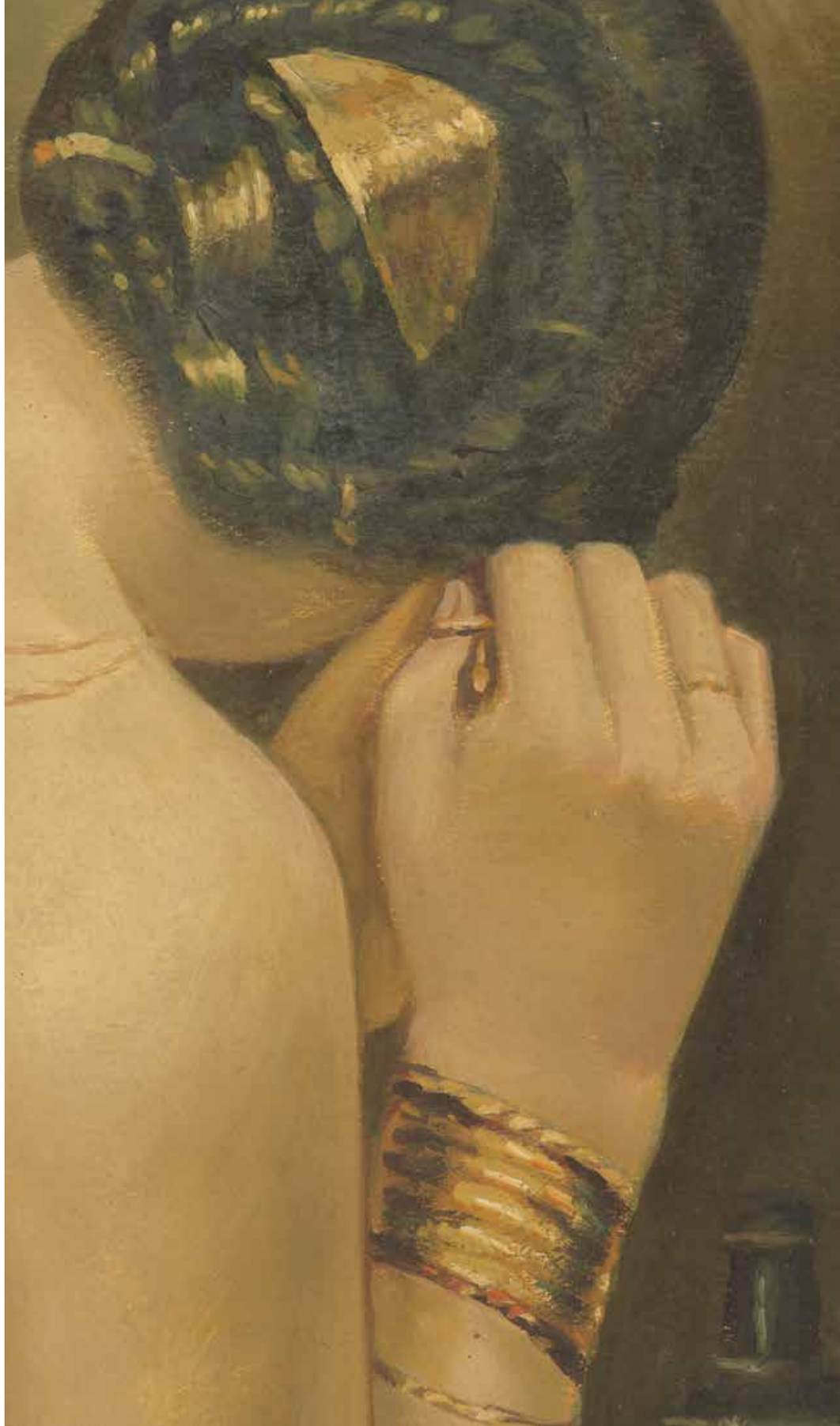

Fig. 5

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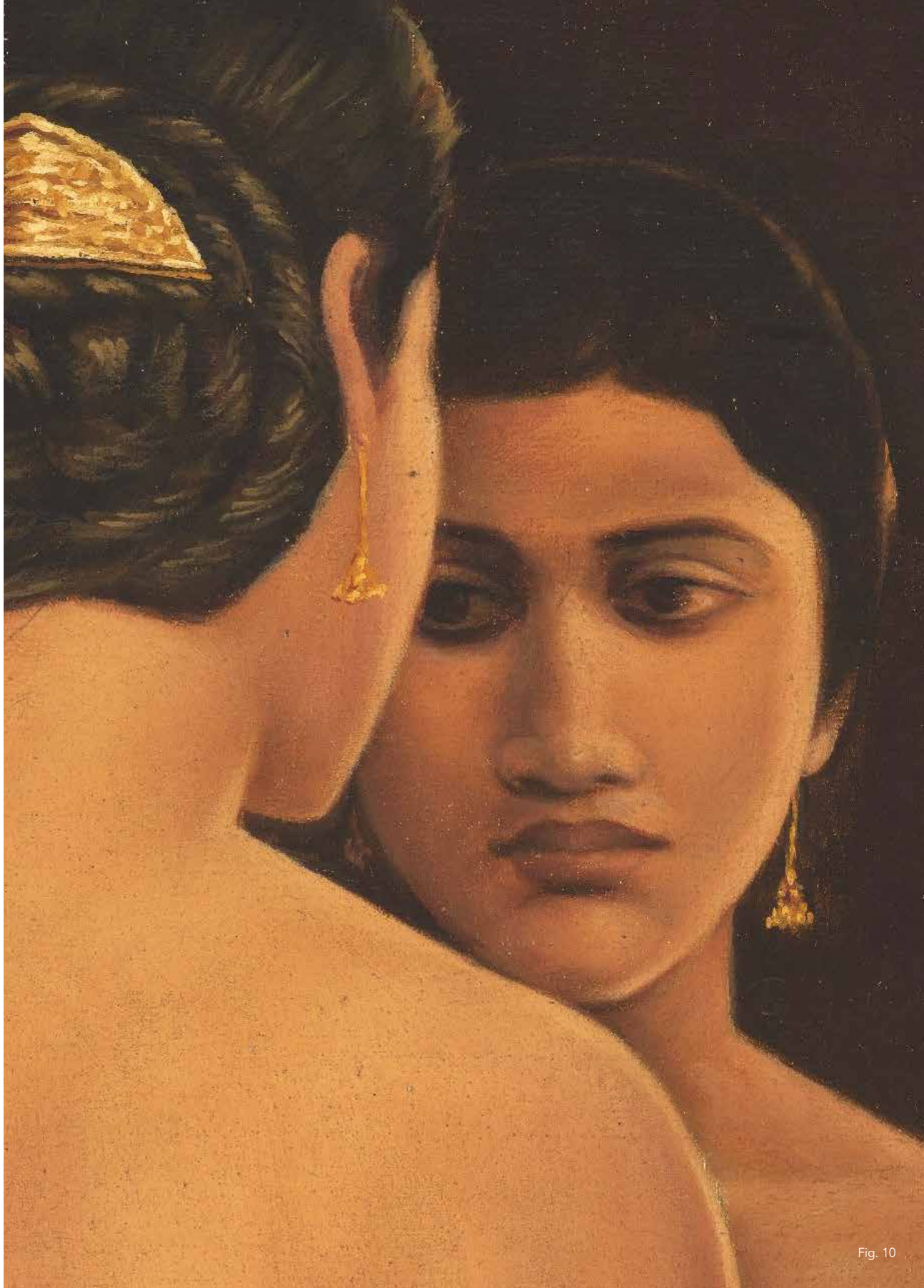
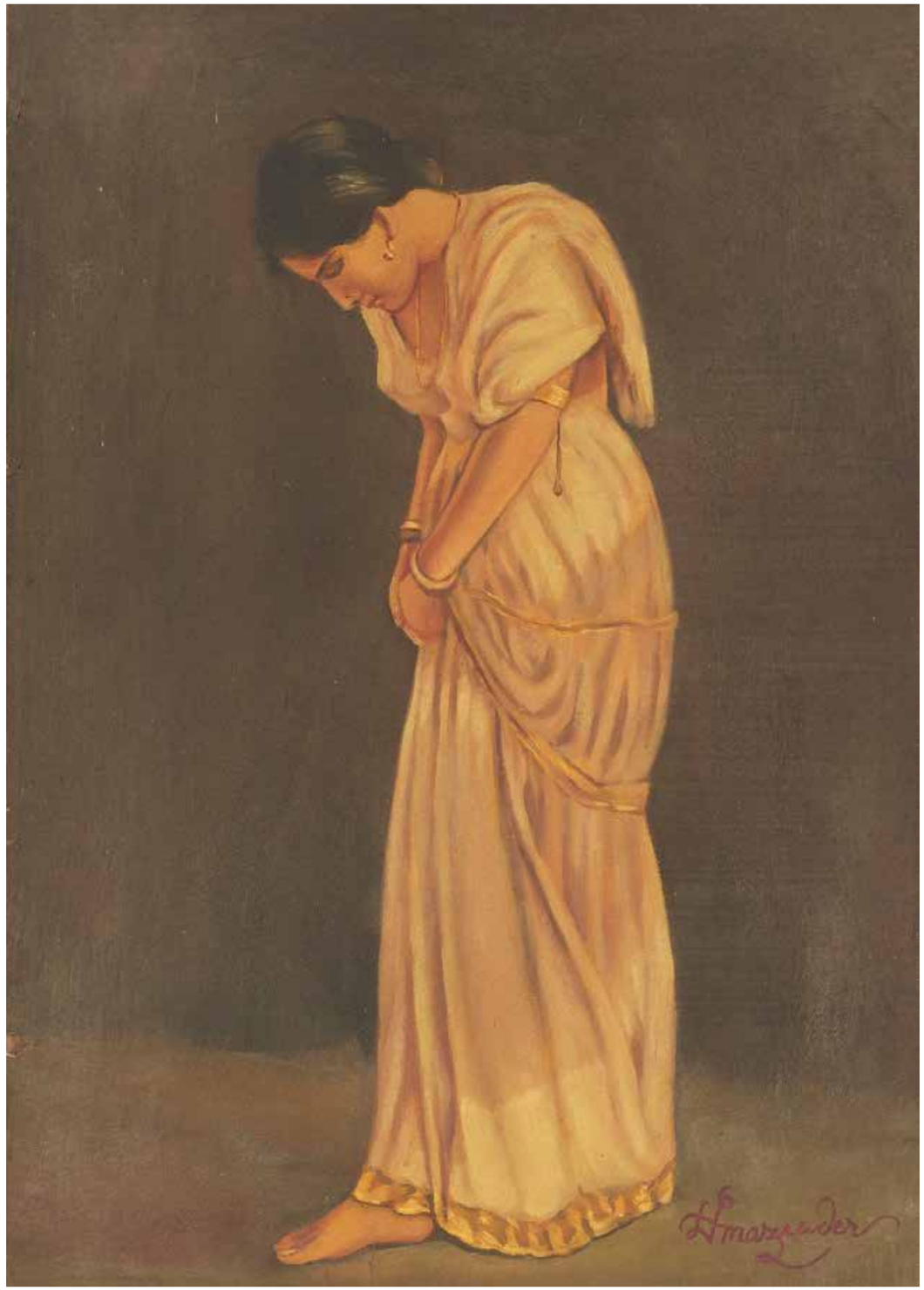


Fig. 10

Fig. 11



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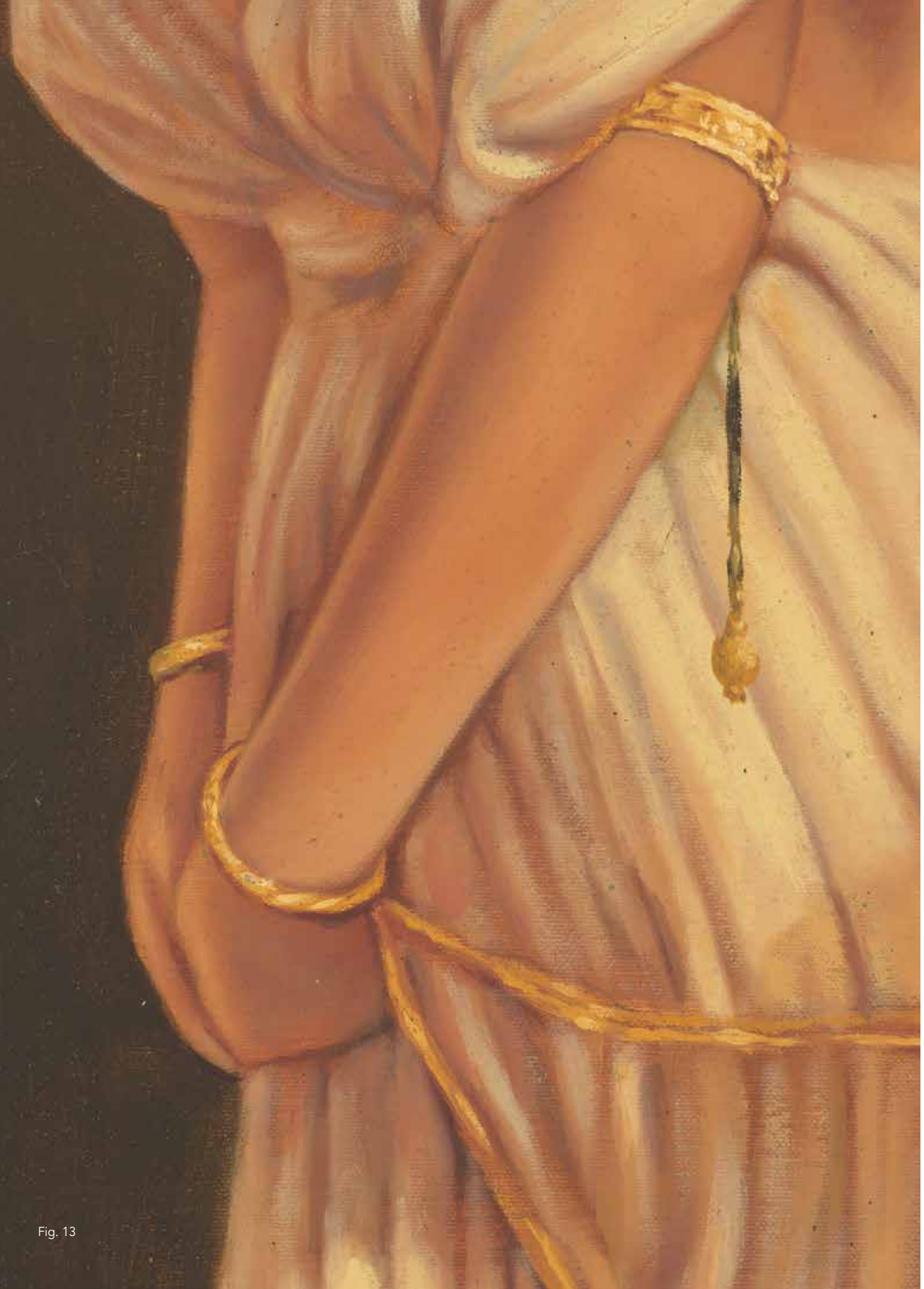
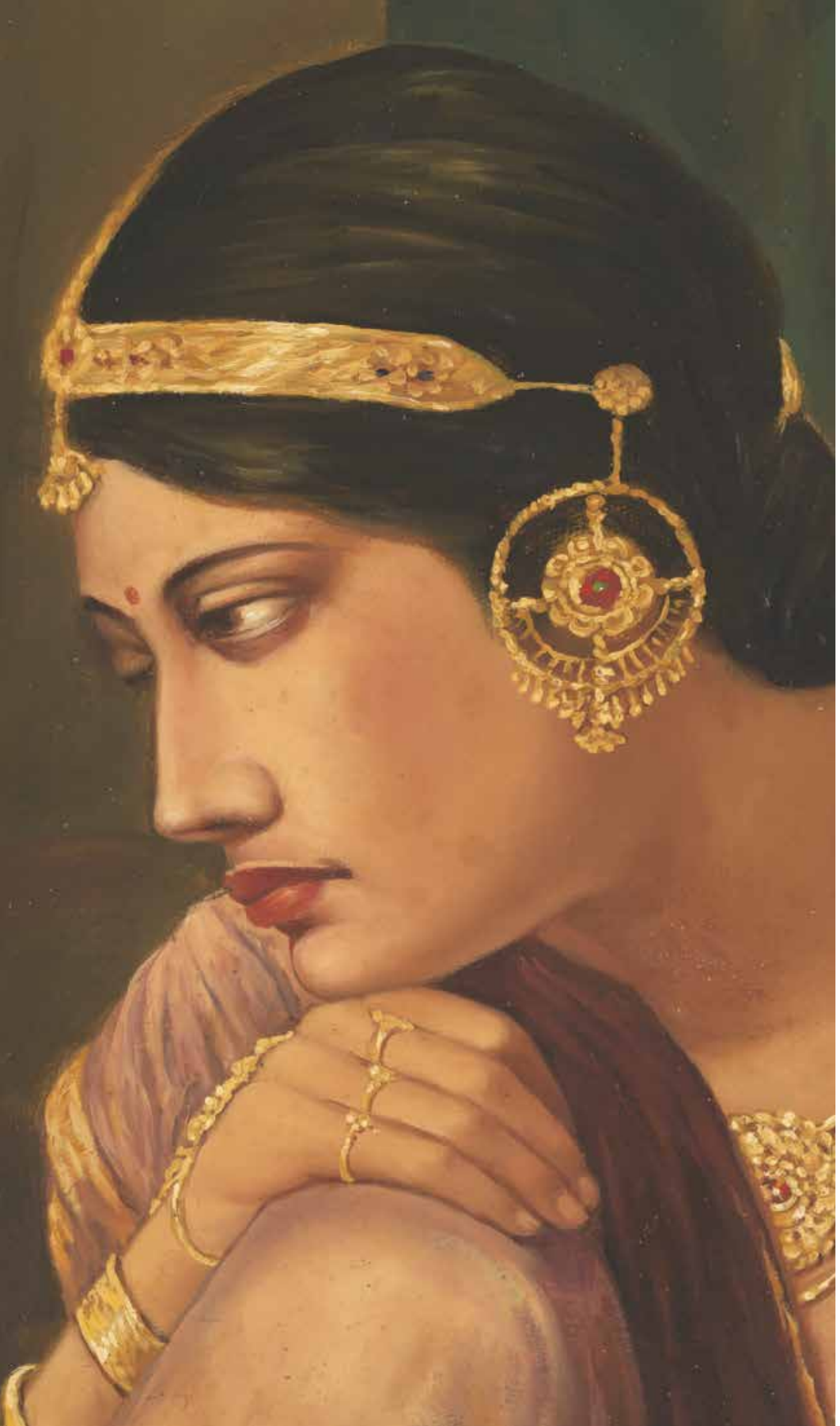


Fig. 13

Fig. 14

Fig. 15

Fig. 16



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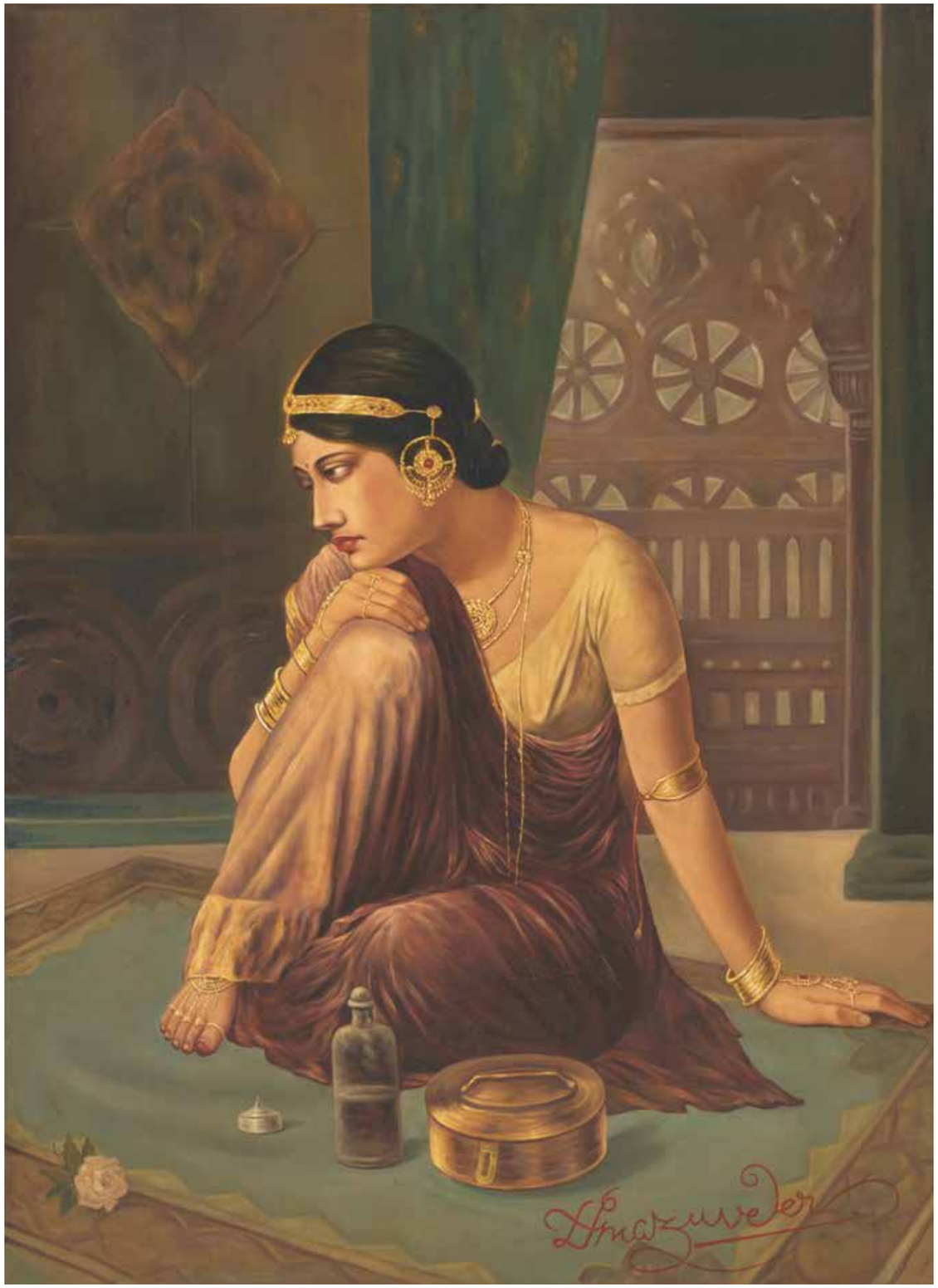

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Fig. 19

Fig. 20

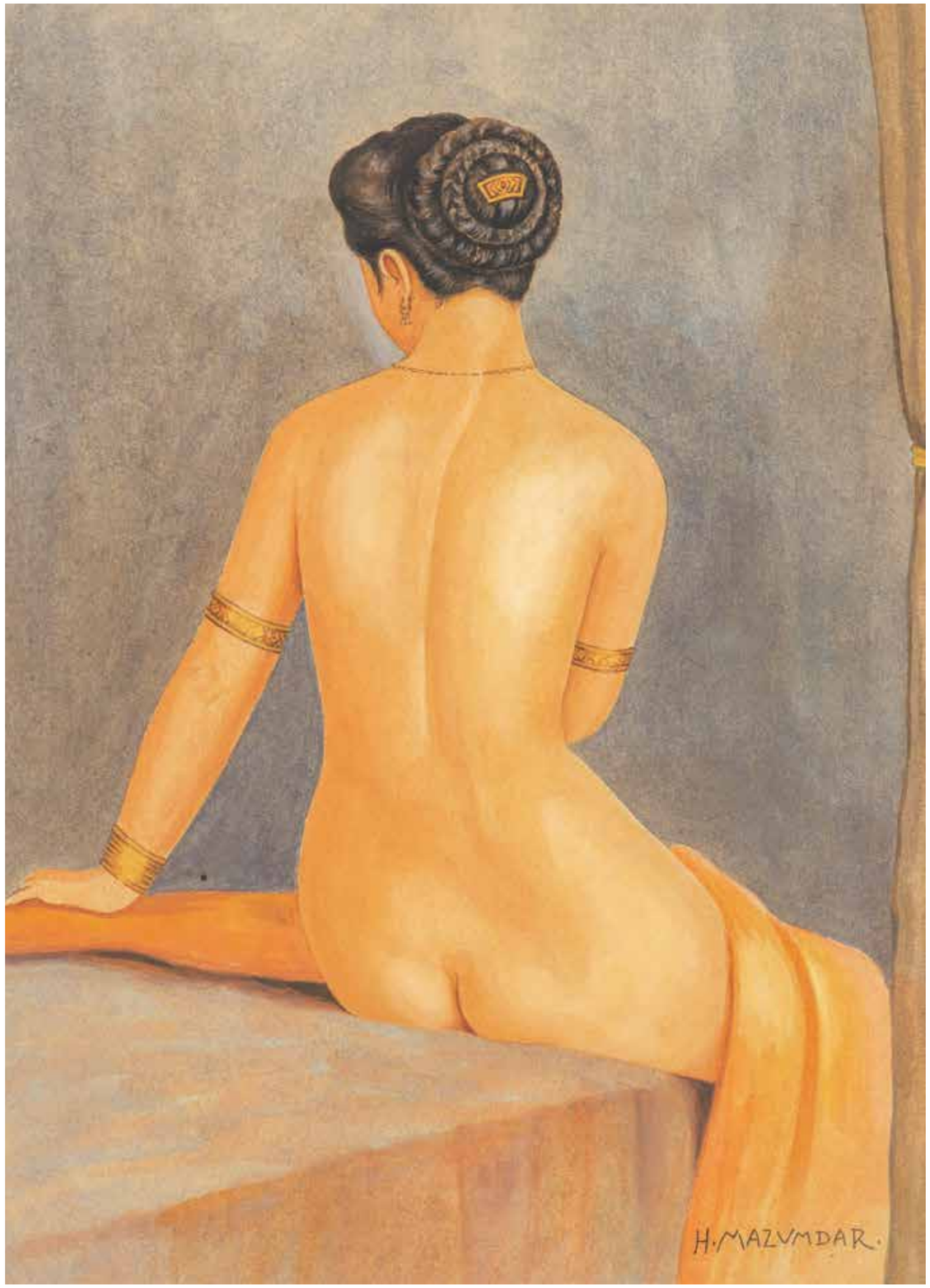

Fig. 21

Fig. 22

Fig. 23

Fig. 24

"It was providence that I was brought up in Calcutta,
surrounded by arts and strong women.
Inadvertently, this shaped my taste in art as it uniquely
represents my own narrative".

N. Kumar

Fig. 25

Fig. 26

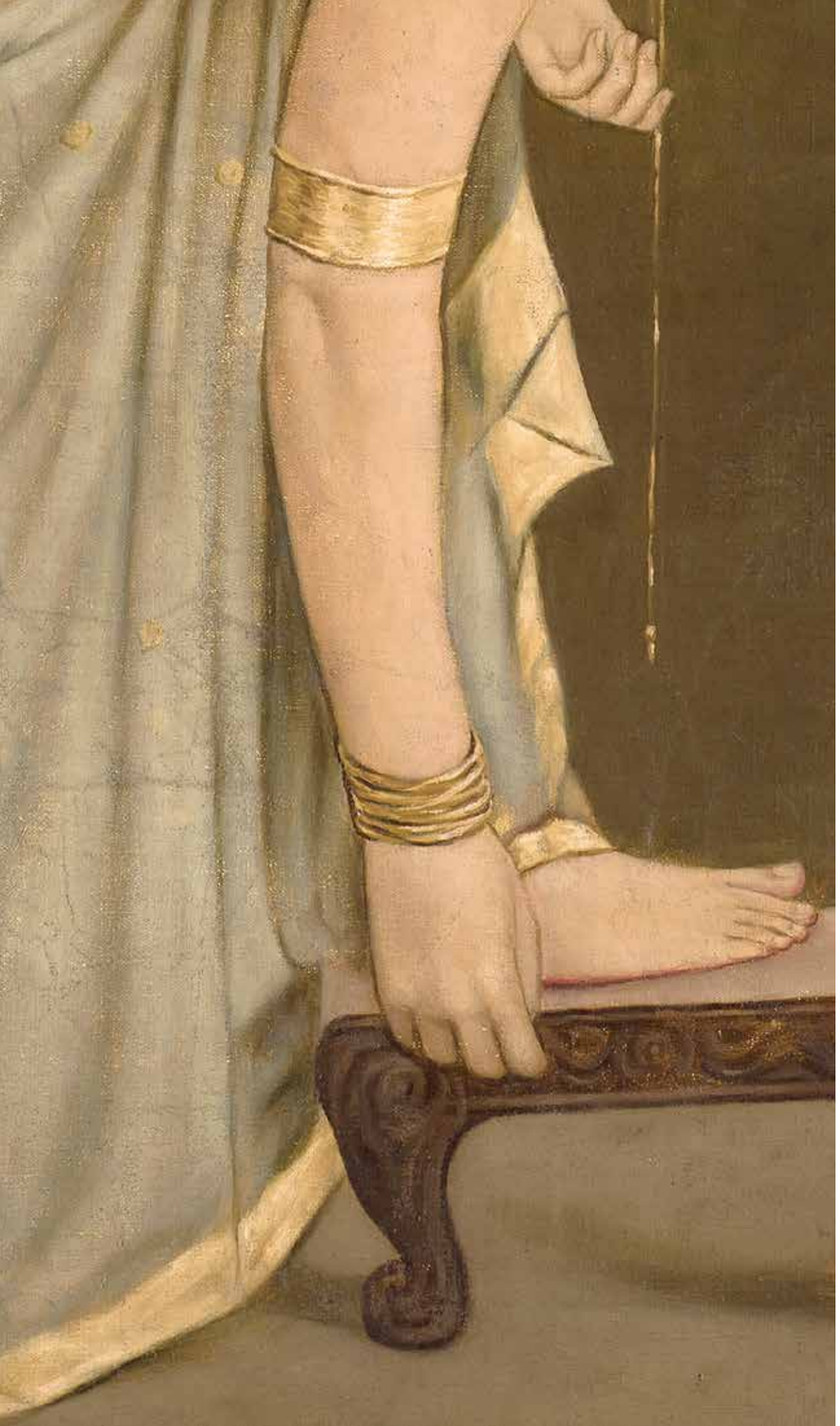

Fig. 27

Fig. 28

Fig. 29

Fig. 30

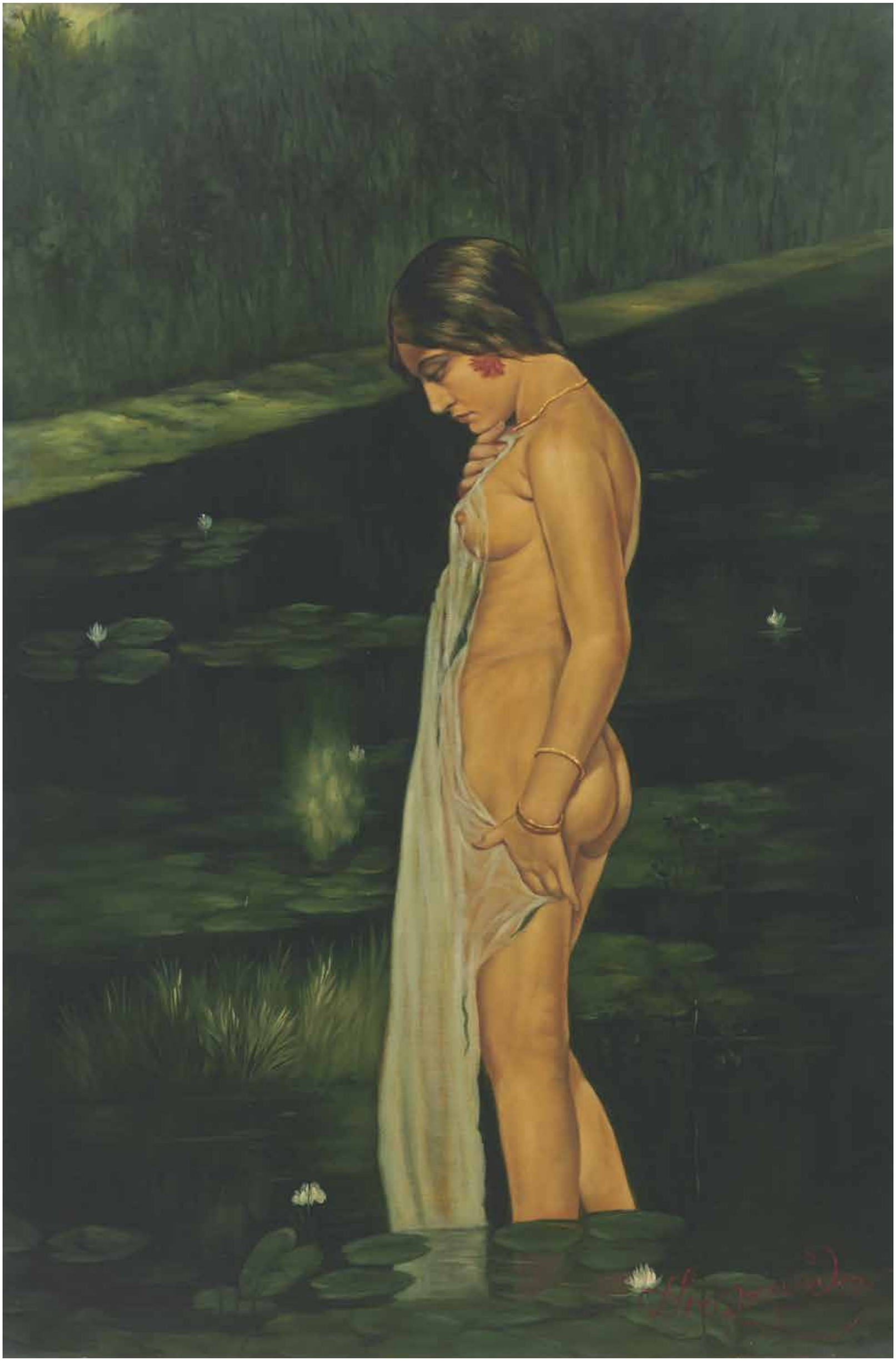

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Fig. 32

Fig. 33

Fig. 34

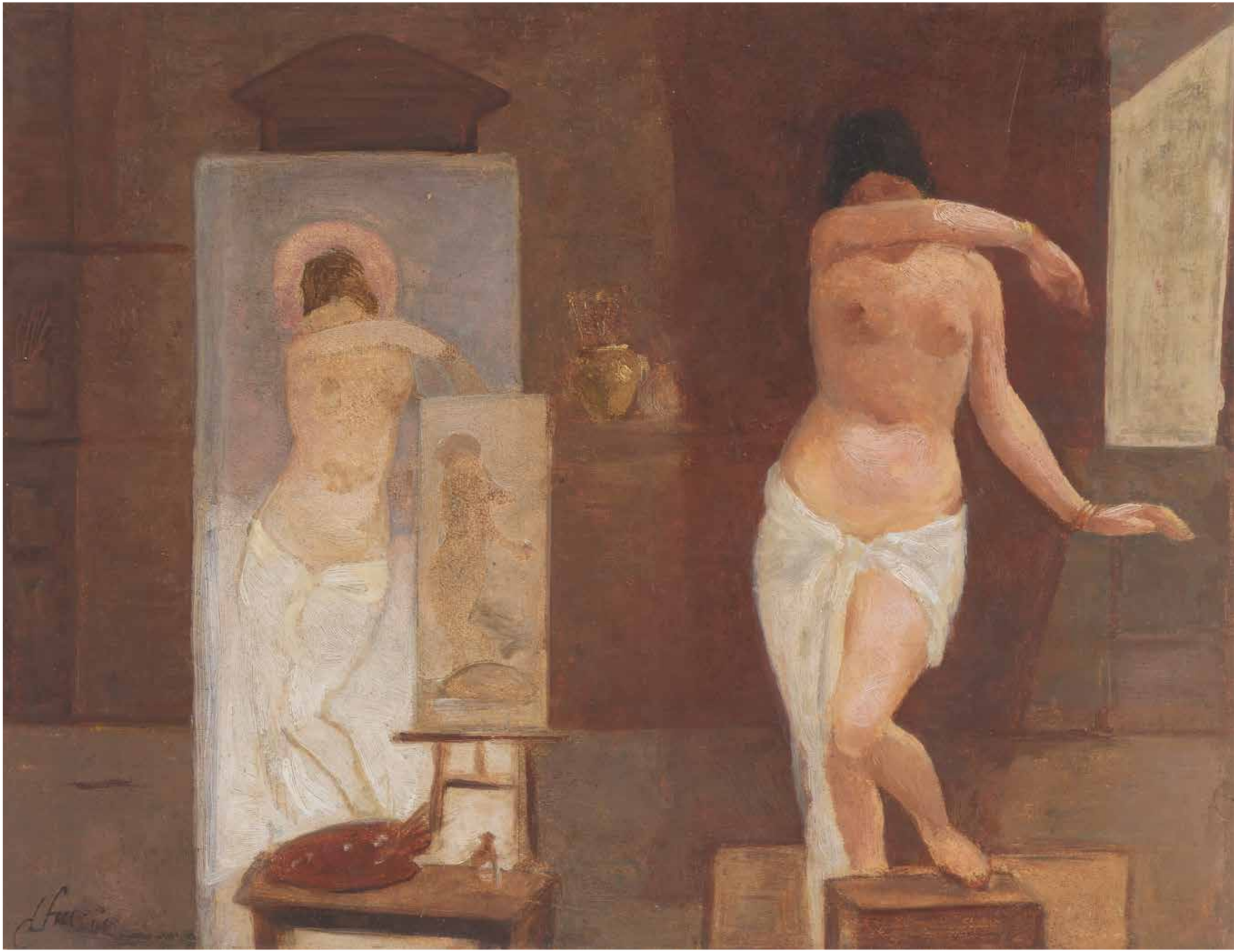

Fig. 35


H. MA

Fig. 36

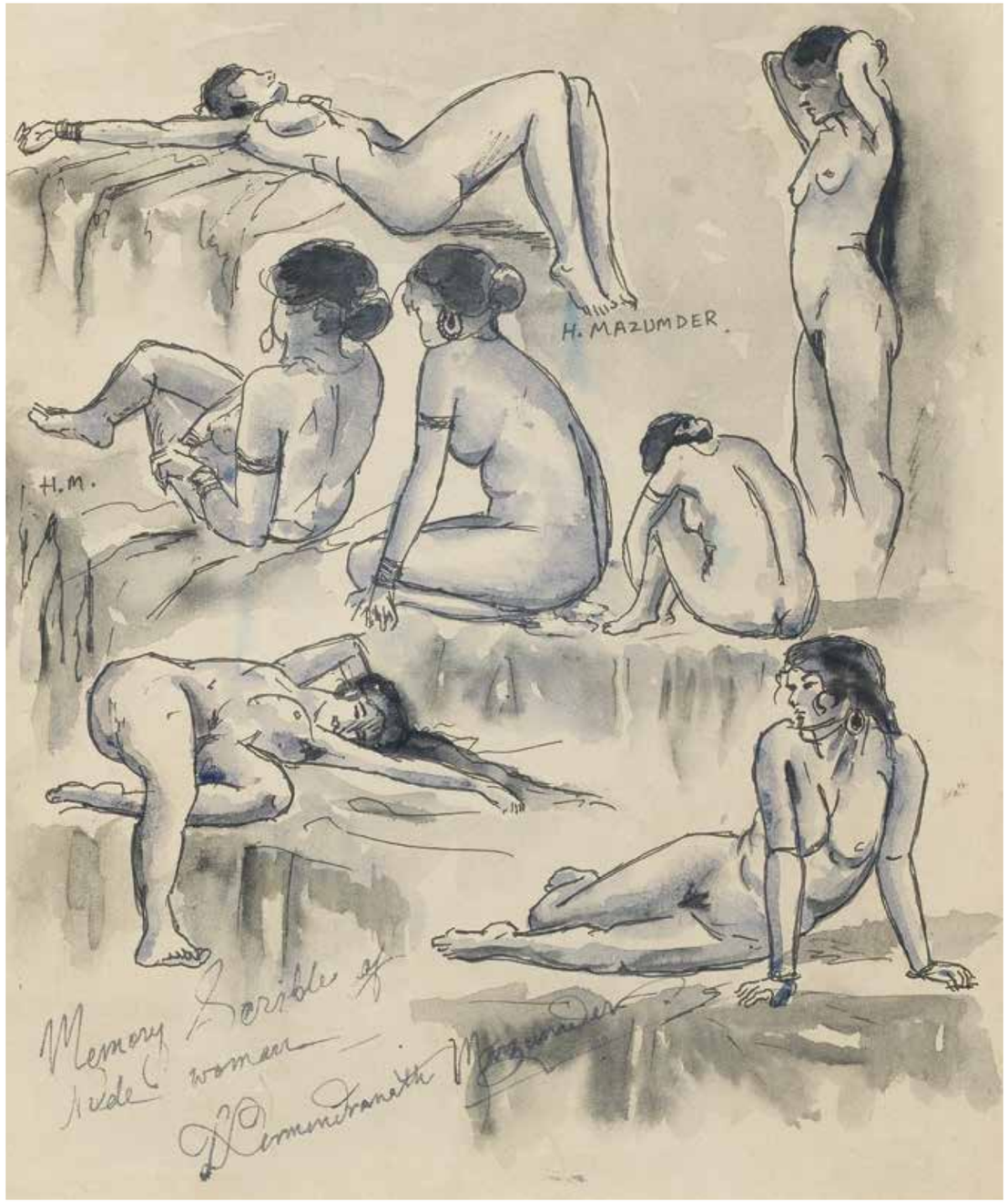
H. MAZUMDER.
H.M.
Memory Horrible of
Nude women
Dhirendranath Mazumder

Fig. 37

Fig. 38

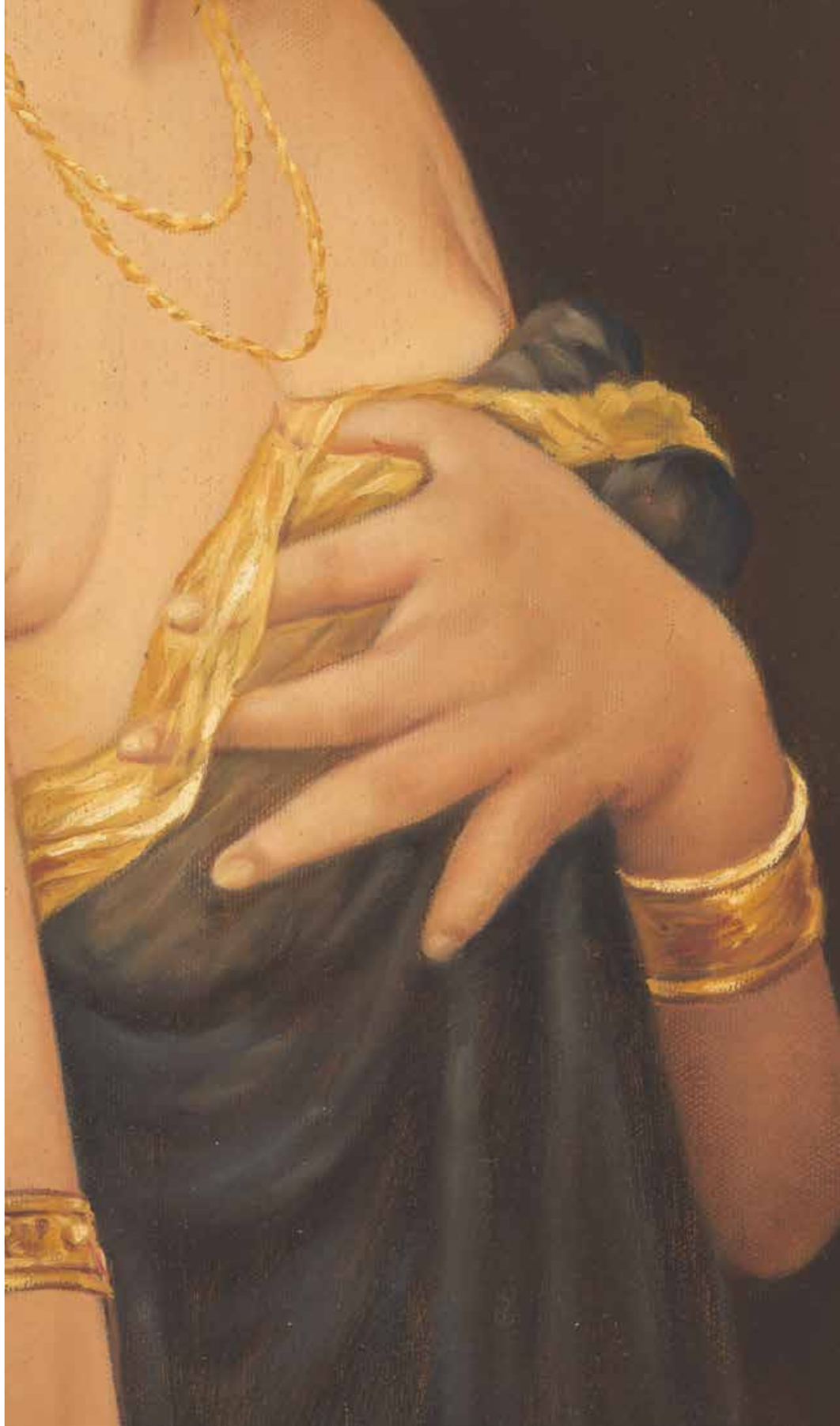

Fig. 39

"Mazumdar's prodigious output had created an entirely new genre of figure painting in India, one that delighted in the sensuous, almost sexualised, qualities of the female flesh of the unattainable upper class elite Bengali woman".

S. Datta

Fig. 40

Fig. 41

Fig. 42

Fig. 43

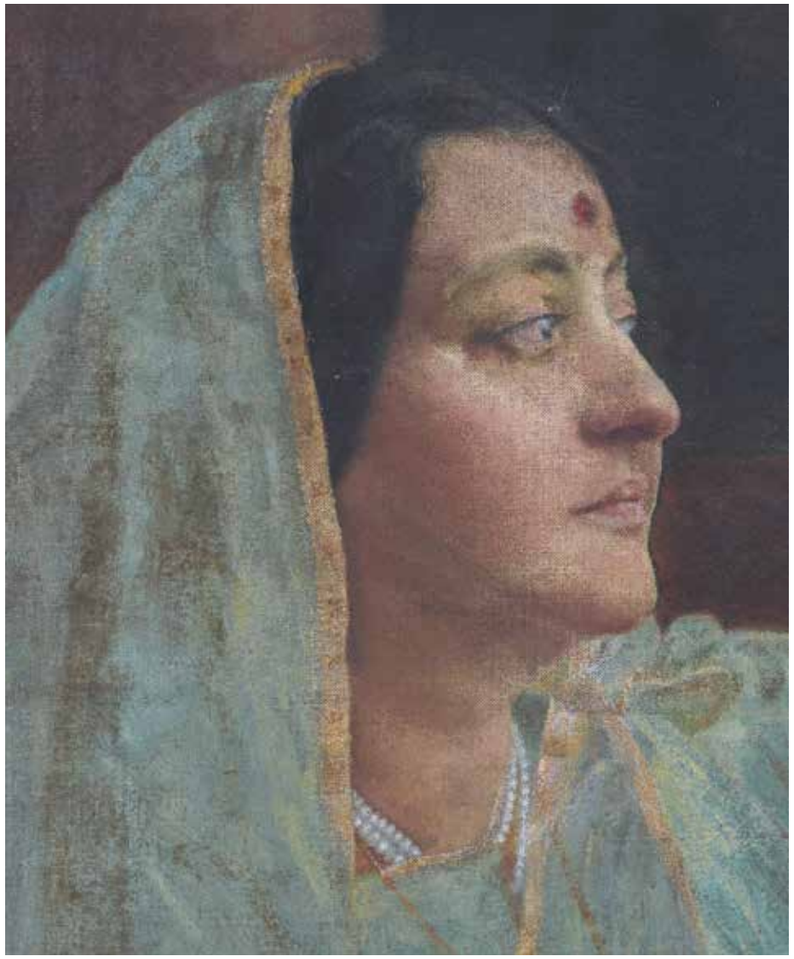

Fig. 44

Fig. 45

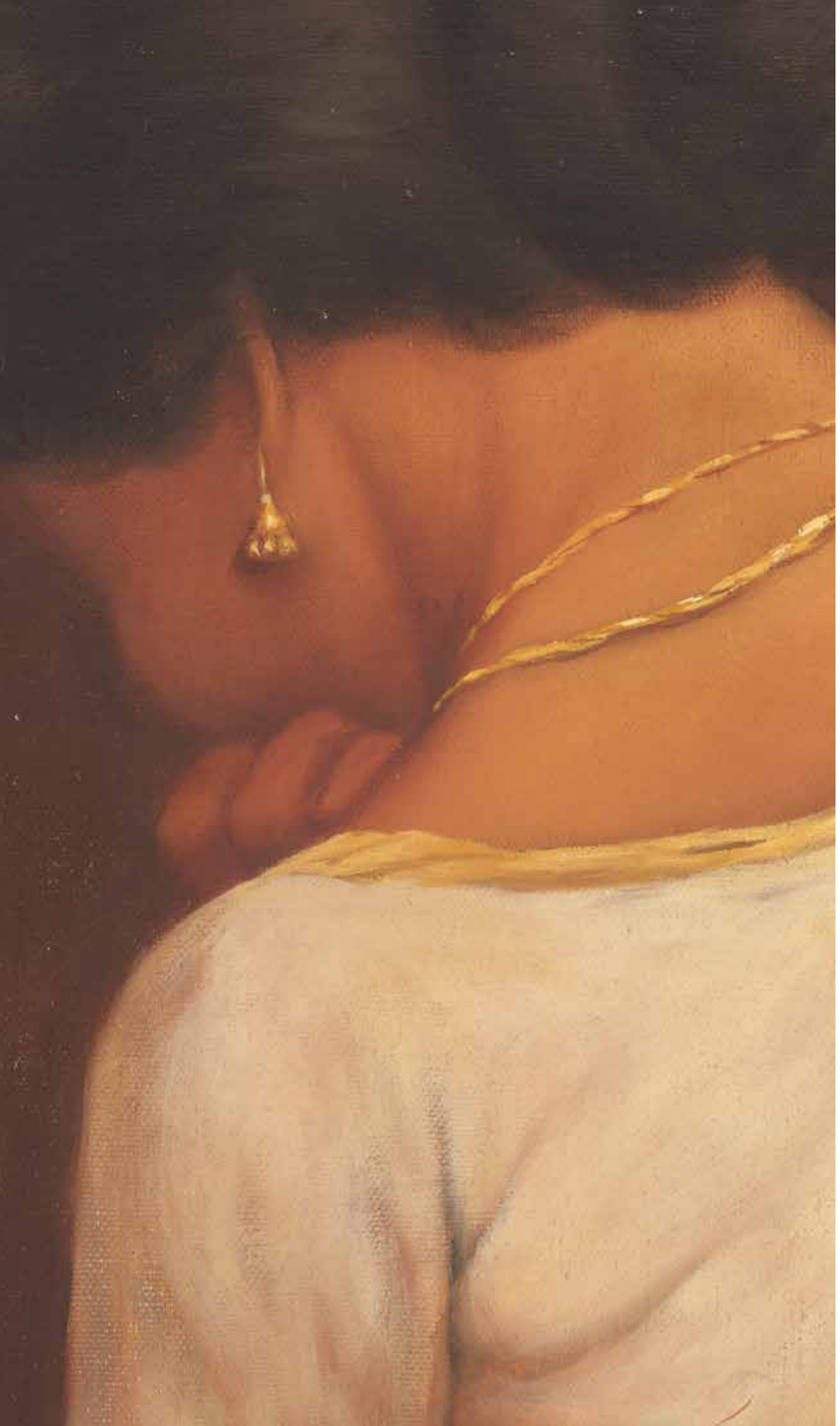

Fig. 46

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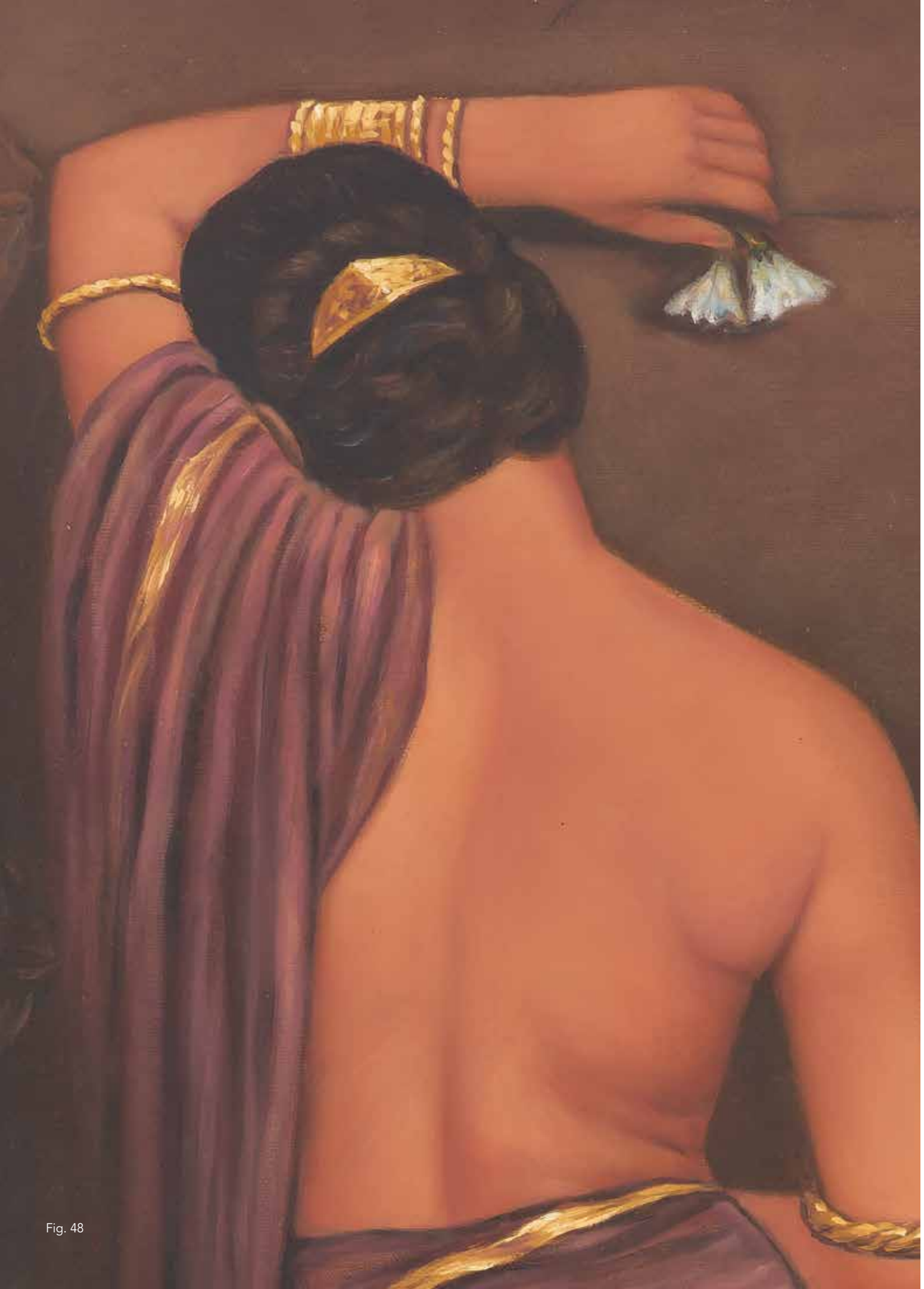

Fig. 48

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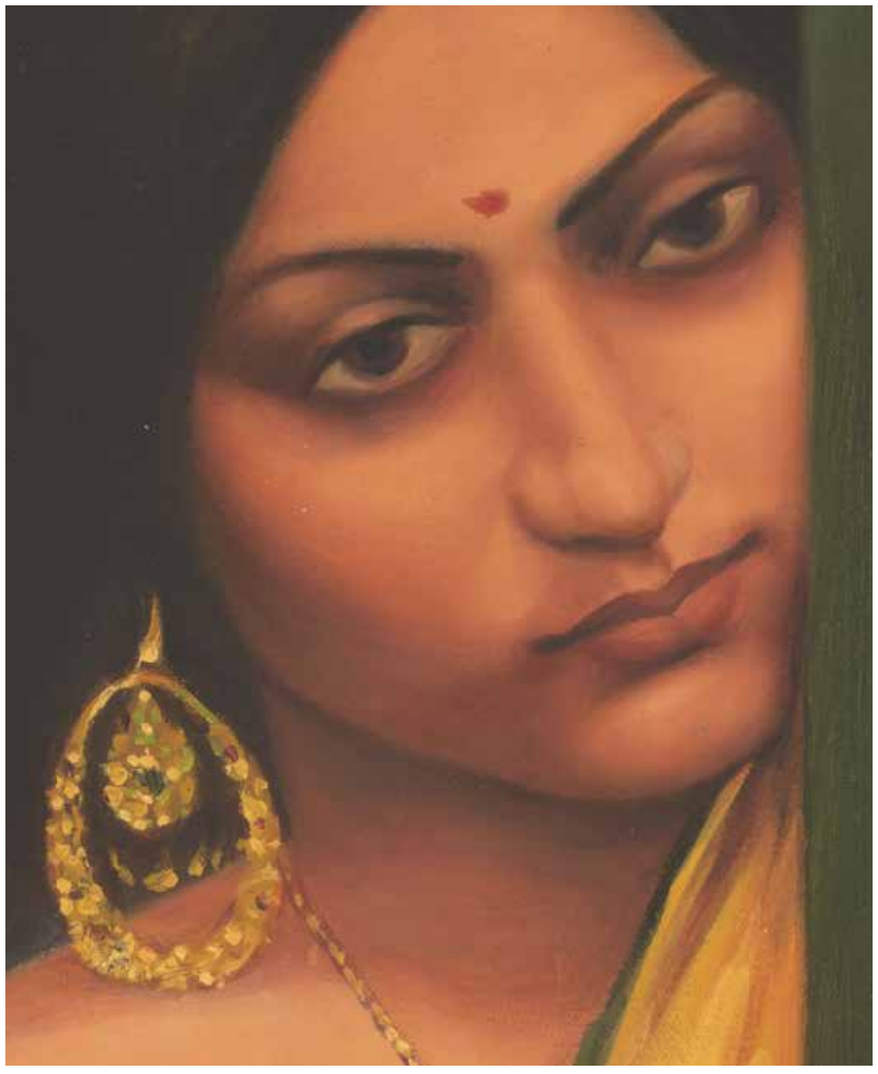

Fig. 50

Fig. 51

"Mazumdar's significance to contemporary culture resides in the possibility of bridging the state of the human condition through presencing".

V. Purushothaman

Fig. 52

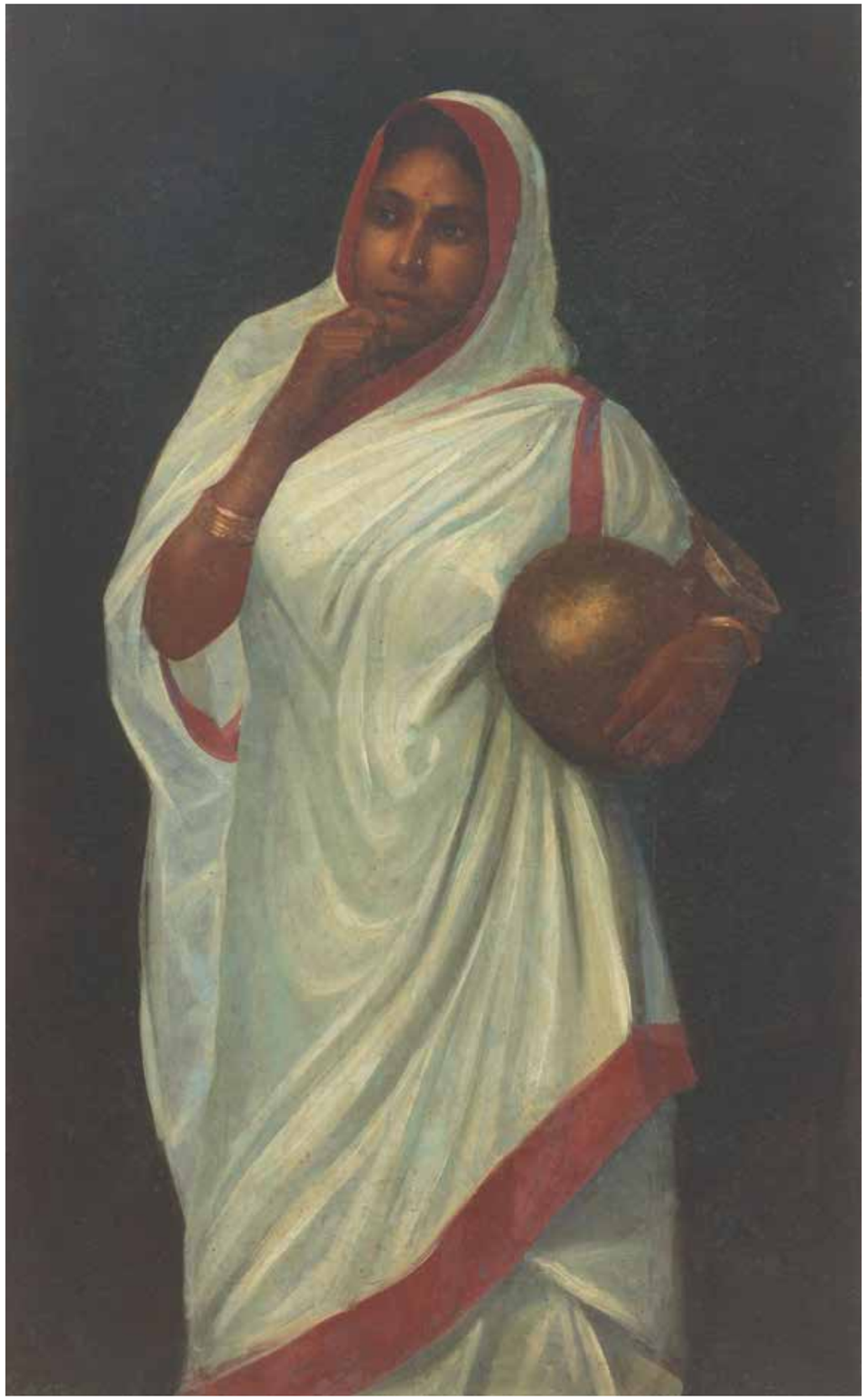

Fig. 53

Fig. 54

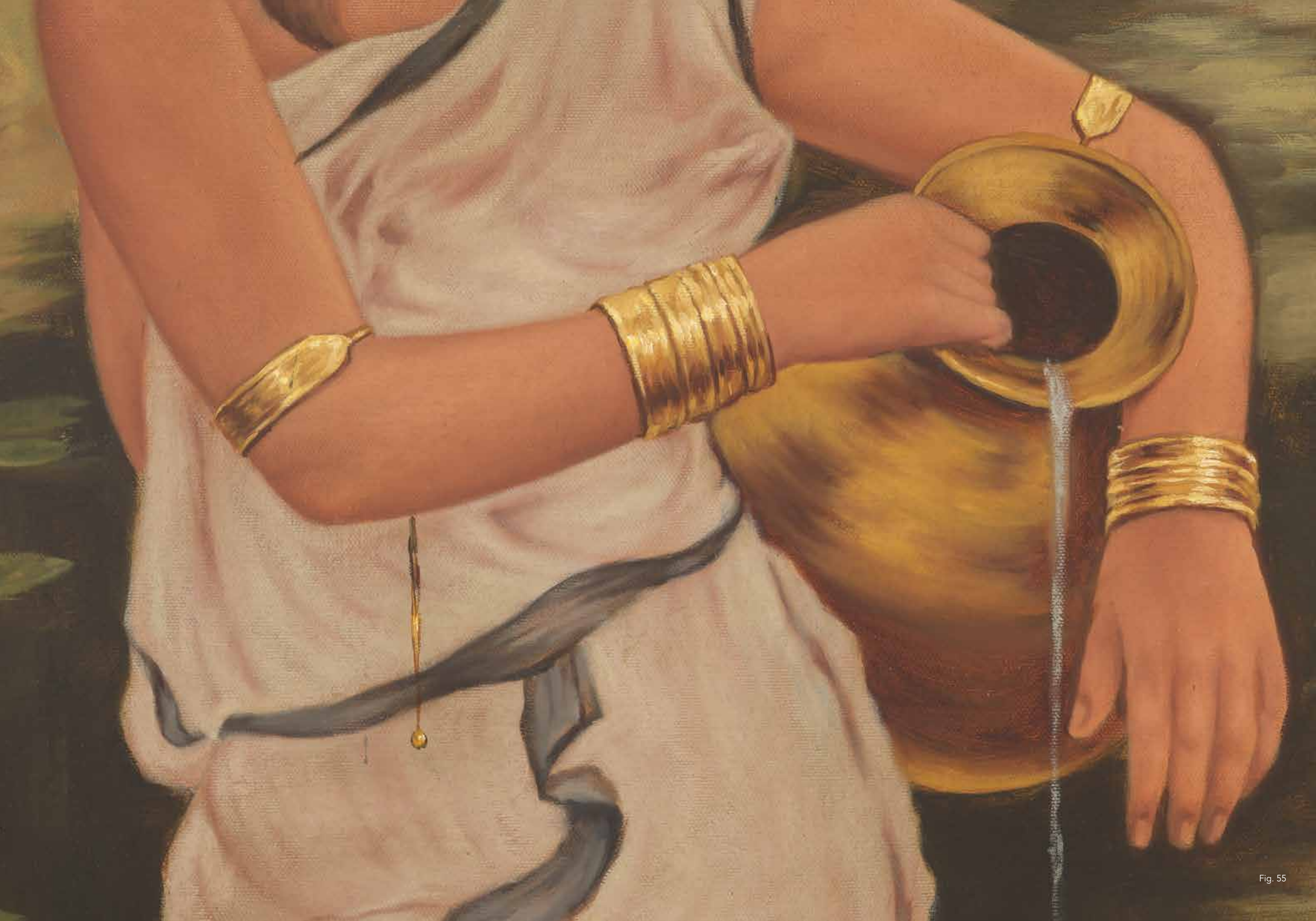

Fig. 55

"Mazumdar created a genre of Bengali beauties that captured the imagination of the contemporary Bengali public because of the novelty of their intimacy and their immediacy".

P. Mitter

Fig. 56

Fig. 57

Fig. 58

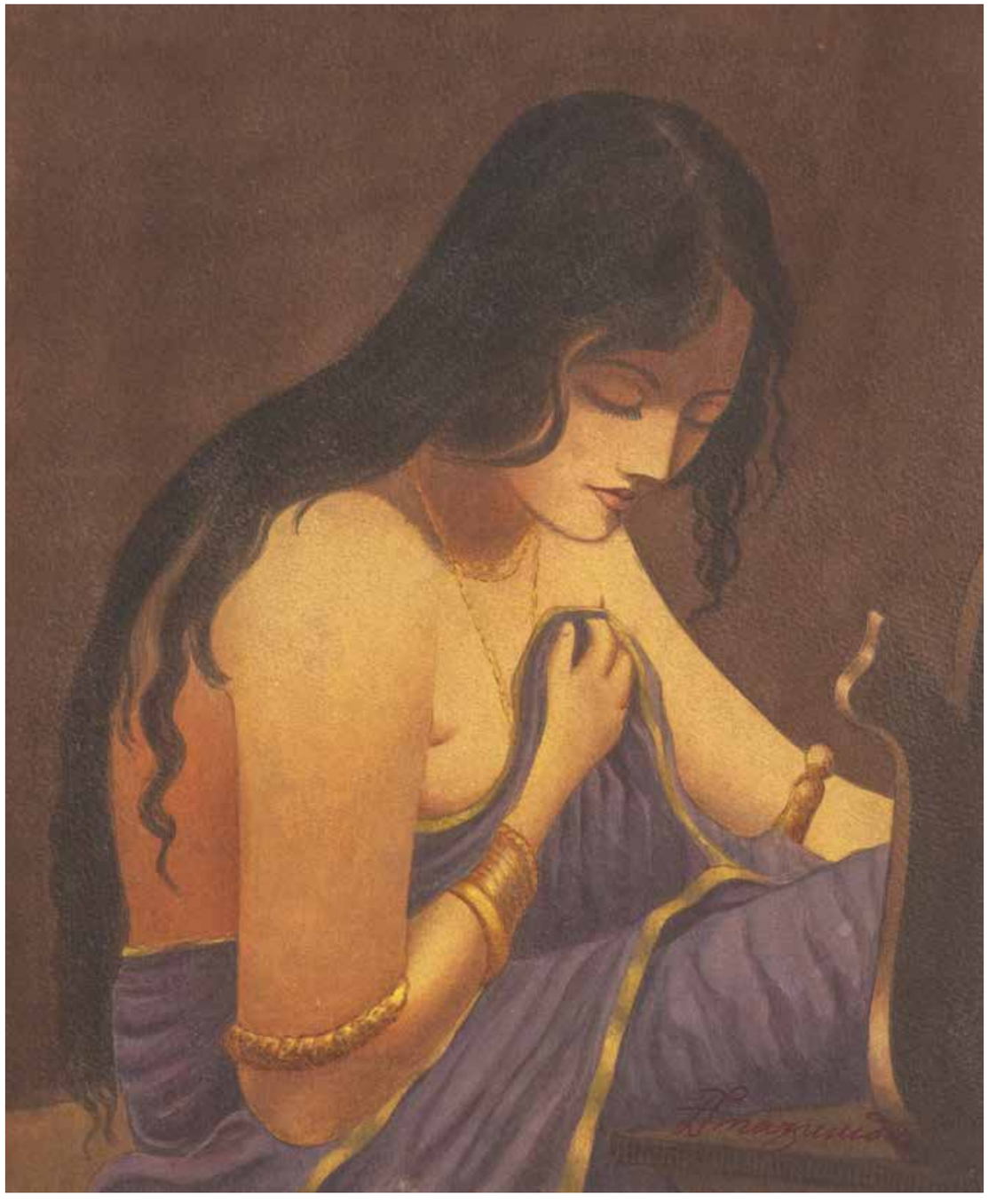

Fig. 59

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Fig. 61

Fig. 62

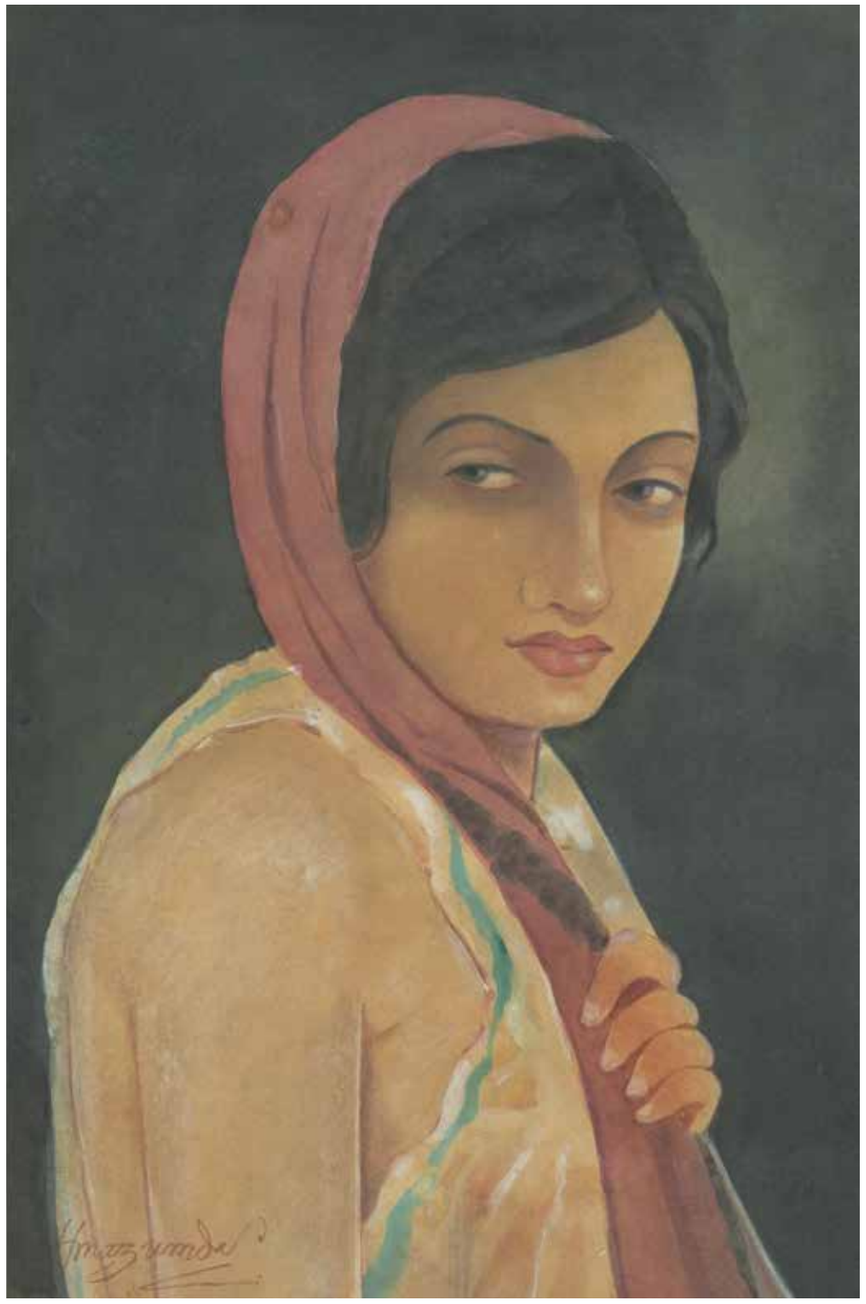

Fig. 63

Essays

"Mazumdar's beautiful, secretive women bring us – however unwittingly – to the doorstep of a dozen dilemmas; to the paradoxes and problems that beset the 'idea of India' "

Zehra Jumabhoy

Hemendranath and the vexed question of the wet sari effect

Partha Mitter

It is indeed a pleasure to write on Hemen Mazumdar for the major show on the artist in Singapore. I had first come across Mazumdar's erotic paintings as an adolescent in Calcutta in Bengali illustrated periodicals, *Bharatbarsha* and *Masik Basumati*. One had to examine them furtively so as not to be caught out by the grown ups. Years later, in the late 1970s, I had started planning my work on Art and Nationalism in Colonial India. In part two of this project, I started working on Mazumdar as part of a new generation of academic painters that challenged the nationalist Bengal School of painting led by Abanindranath Tagore. By the 1980s, I had turned to his life and had interviewed his widowed daughter-in-law who lived in South Calcutta. While researching Mazumdar, I remembered from my adolescence the famous painting dating from 1921, *Palli Pran* (Soul of The Village, Figure 32), and I began to study the work in earnest with a view to understanding the artist. I was fascinated with his technique of offering tantalising glimpses of the flesh through the wet sari and called it the 'wet sari effect'. The painting is of a young bride returning from a dip the village pond. The Australian journalist, Bruce Palling was in Calcutta at the time. He was impressed with my somewhat serendipitous title and described the work in a newspaper article. In 1994, I published an essay on Mazumdar in the leading Bengali newspaper, *Ananda Bazar*, marking his centenary, and posing the question: how should one evaluate the artist in the present day?[1] Was this an actual incident spied on by Hemendranath? He explained his initial inspiration and the construction of a highly popular trope, imitated by a host of contemporary painters such as S. G. Thakur Singh, in his introduction to the work first published in *Indian Academy* of Art (1921):

Here is presented one [example] of the "wet cloth" studies. The poetic spectacle of a fair maiden with her sari, wet and dripping, wound round her in picturesque folds and the transparent wet cloth discovering here and there the suggestive flesh-tints of her well-proportioned figure, caught in the imagination of the artist during one of his holiday sojourns in his native village in East Bengal. He began his study the same day, we are told, though it took him several months' labour with his models at his Calcutta studio before he could perfect his technique.[2]

But first to sketch a brief history of the art of the period and Hemendranath's role in it. Academic art, introduced by the British Raj, was challenged by the nationalist art movement, the Bengal School of painting, led by Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951) and his disciples who dominated the art scene in the first decades of the twentieth century. In the 1920s, Indian art gained further complexity in a triangular standoff between the orientalists of the Bengal School, the academic artists and the avant-garde artists, Rabindranath Tagore, Amrita Sher-Gil and Jamini Roy. Around 1915, academic artists had been in retreat all over India because of the Bengal School. However,

1 - Mitra (Mitter), Partha, Hemendranath o Shilper Bāstavdharma, *Anandabazar Patrika*, 23.10.1994.
2 - Mitter, Partha, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994) and *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-garde* (Reaktion Books, London and Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2007).

a new generation of naturalists in Bengal – Hemendranath Mazumdar, Atul Bose, B. C. Law (Bhabani Charan Laha) Jogen Seal – reasserted the importance of figurative art and all of them were accomplished draughtsmen.[3]

Hemendranath Mazumdar (1898-1948) was born in a landowning family in Bengal. He enrolled at the art school in Calcutta against his father's wishes. Having fallen out with the authorities, he then moved to the privately-owned Jubilee Academy. Disillusioned with both art schools, he decided to teach himself figure drawing by means of books obtained from England. The role of reproductions in art books in the formation of colonial artists cannot be gainsaid. In the 1920s, he, Atul Bose, and the great Jamini Roy – the last two completed the course at Calcutta government art school – became close friends, making ends meet with artistic odd jobs, such as painting scenes for the theatre, or producing portraits of the deceased for the family based on photographs, which was a popular 'Victorian' custom in Bengal.

The group decided to set up an academic artists' circle to challenge the onslaught of the Bengal School against academic artists. The group brought out an influential illustrated journal, *Indian Academy of Art*, in 1920, to win the Bengali public, and organised exhibitions to showcase academic artists from all around India. In addition, they needed to counteract the Bengal School journal, *Rupam's* dominance. To ensure wide readership, the modestly priced but elegantly produced *Indian Academy of Art* covered a wide variety of topics. In addition to articles on art theory that expatiated on naturalism, it supplied art news and gossip, travelogues, short stories and humorous pieces. However, the ultimate intention of the *Indian Academy of Art* was to publicise the works of Mazumdar, Bose and Jamini Roy (who remained with them for a while but was gradually moving away from academic naturalism.) Colour plates of their prize-winning pictures dominated the issues. Here among other paintings, Mazumdar's first major painting, Palli Pran (Soul of the Village), on the 'wet sari effect' was published.[4]

The elegant journal with high-quality reproductions soon folded because of financial difficulties. Their second venture, Society of Fine Arts, to show academic artists, enjoyed greater success. Let us remember that this was the era of the dominance of the Bengal School, the first nationalist art movement in India. Abanindranath Tagore and his students had managed to oust the academic artists from positions of power. In the ideological battle between the westernisers (academic artists) and the orientalists (Abanindranath's pupils), the centre of power for oriental art rested in the Indian Society of Oriental Art, run by the brothers Abanindranath and Gaganendranath. The Tagores exercised strict control over this institution by excluding all academic painters.

Effectively debarred from exhibiting in Calcutta, academic artists of Bengal were forced to send their works to exhibitions outside Bengal, which was beyond the reach of most. The group resolved to challenge the authority of the Society of Oriental Art by founding the rival society and holding ambitious all-India exhibitions. The first exhibition of the Society of Fine Arts in 1921-22 showed over a thousand paintings from academic artists from all over India, which went some way towards redressing the wide neglect felt by academic artists.[5]

3 - Mitter, Partha, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994) and *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-garde* (Reaktion Books, London and Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2007).
4 - See note 2 above.
5 - See the second year of the exhibition reported by Chaudhuri, B. Chitra Pradarshani, *Bharat Barsha*, yr 10, vol.2, no.5, 1329, 725-30.

The group disbanded after Bose left for England in 1924. Mazumdar's career as a professional painter however took off. He produced a series of subjects centering on women engaged in leisurely activities, such as toilet, or daydreaming. See for instance, a delicate portrait of a woman in reverie (Figure 40) that demonstrates his ability to capture a mood. However, his forte was his particular rendering of the back-view of a female subject, which gave him an opportunity to bring out in a convincing manner the sensuous layers and folds of smooth youthful flesh, with a hint of muscles and the bone-structure. The important point is that none of these women were adolescent but mature and presumably married. There are a number of important examples in the show: *The Wounded Vanity* (Figure 49), *Blue Sari* (Figure 22), *Harmony* (Figure 47) and also *Image* (Figure 7), which excel in the sensuous quality of the back. His reputation, however, rests on his erotic paintings of women in *la drape mouillée* and rarely shown fully unclothed, with the mere hint of an item of clothing that accentuated the figure rather than concealing it. I have mentioned the best-known *Palli Pran*. There are a few others in the show. *Monsoon* shows a woman washing her feet sitting on the steps of the river ghat (Figures 57, 58) and another of a young woman emerging from the ghat, carrying a water pot with the breasts showing through the sari (Figure 54). His one other successful attempt to capture translucent flesh tones was a large ambitious watercolour nude suggestively titled, Dilli ka Laddu, loosely translated as 'the obscure object of desire' (Figure 43).

Mazumdar won no less than three prizes at the venerable Bombay Art Society in three successive years, including the gold medal of the society for his painting, *Smriti* (Memories) in 1920. The journalist Kanhaiyalal Vakil of the *Bombay Chronicle* complained: 'One Mr H. Mazumdar of Calcutta won three times the first prize of the Exhibition. It is a disgrace to the Bombay artists...Either the Judging Committee must be incompetent or Mr Mazumdar is too high for the exhibition.'[6] Around 1926, Mazumdar had his first financial success when a commercial firm acquired the reproduction rights to one of his paintings for a substantial sum. The painting provided the main attraction for its annual calendar. By the 1940s, Mazumdar gained notoriety or fame (according to one's outlook) as a painter of partially clothed women. His large oils of partially clothed women and his intimate, voyeuristic eroticism attracted the Maharajas of Jaipur, Bikaner, Kotah, Kashmir, Cooch Behar, Mayurbhanj, Patiala and other the princely states who commissioned him to work for them. Among the nobility, the Maharaja of Patiala, Sir Bhupindranth Singh (1891-1938) was the most devoted, engaging him as a state artist for five years on a handsome salary, which enabled him to build his studio in Calcutta. Apart from his figures and portraits, Mazumdar completed an ambitious screen triptych with the help of assistants.

Even as he consolidated his reputation, Mazumdar kept a wary eye on the Bengali public, continuing to publish the *Indian Academy of Art* single-handedly. He aimed at covering all contemporary Indian artists but did not neglect to give considerable publicity to his own work. The *Art of Mr. H. Mazumdar* in five volumes (1920-24) provided publicity for the artist as well as presenting Mazumdar's polemical attack on the ideological foundations of the Bengal School, which he contended, was out of touch with contemporary India. Believing

6 - Quoted in S, Ghosh, Karigari Kalpana o Bangali Udyog, Calcutta, 1988, 20.

in the universality of naturalist art, he insisted that only direct observation of nature could provide an objective standard. Mazumdar waged war relentless against the orientalists till the end of his life.

So, what did Mazumdar achieve? He created a genre of Bengali beauties that captured the imagination of the contemporary Bengali public because of the novelty of their intimacy and their immediacy. They were not impersonal figures learned from art schools but palpable, breathing, real women. The history of the female figure in Indian art is long and complex, with the erotic quotient ranging from semi-draped *apsaras* (celestial maidens), *yakshis* (folk deities) and goddesses in Indian temple sculptures to frank scenes of copulation and other sexual activities. These frank scenes were in keeping with the general spirit of the ancient period as also reflected in the great fifth-century author Kalidasa's Sanskrit poems and plays. A different outlook emerged after the end of the Hindu and Buddhist periods. Under the impact of Muslim cultures, 'respectable' women no longer appeared unveiled in public. Peasant women had no such constraints, nor did respectable Nair women of Kerala who did not hesitate to go bare-breasted as late as the twentieth century. Equally, in the era of the Turkish-Afghan Sultanates down to the Mughal Empire, the nude was less prevalent in miniature painting, except in the case of miniatures from Rajasthan and Pahari (Hill) states of the Punjab: you are offered a glimpse of beautiful slender aristocratic women taking their bath or getting dressed aided by female attendants, with their coy breasts slightly exposed.

Things changed dramatically during the British Raj. In the nineteenth century, Christian missionaries campaigned against what they considered the immoral aspects of Hinduism, the sexual depravity of gods such as Krishna and the phallic worship of the Shiva linga. Under the impact of Victorian evangelism, western-educated Indians developed a more puritanical attitude towards dress and comportment, as blouse and petticoat became *de rigueur* for women's attire. A new ambivalence sprang up with regard to the representation of the body in art. The English disapproved of Hindu erotic temple sculptures, and yet worshipped the nude in Victorian academic art, which stood for moral purity and artistic summit. The rulers imposed a new concept of modesty, as to how much body could be exposed without outraging decency. And yet, in no culture was artistic nudity more ubiquitous than the Victorian. The most famous academic painter of India, Raja Ravi Varma (1848-1906) created a new concept of feminine beauty but seldom ventured into the realm of the artistic nude. The Bengal School of painting led by Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951) rejected figure drawing as part of colonial academic tradition, though there were occasionally tantalising glimpses of the bare female torso in Oriental art created by him and his disciples.

The subject of a rustic maiden returning home in a wet sari after her daily ablutions gave the artist scope to represent the model's fleshy figure visible through her wet cloth. For all its clever suggestion of an arrested movement, the work was carefully realised in the studio. In order to capture the particular pose Mazumdar took the aid of photographs as well. He thus invented a new genre of figure painting in India, suggesting sensuous flesh tones and soft quality of the skin, enhanced by the semi-transparent garment. Although

the nineteenth-century academic master Ravi Varma's brother Raja Varma had first treated the subject, this was not widely known or imitated, Mazumdar created an independent genre, spawning imitators, the best-known being Thakur Singh of Punjab.[7] Mazumdar was obsessed with capturing the sexual appeal of the lighter-skinned elite women of Bengal, and even wrote verses on his paintings. Most probably the model or inspiration for all these different women was his wife but the subjects avoid a close identification. His draped studies capture the dreamy sensuousness of his sitters absorbed in their own reveries. The subject, *Rose or Thorn?*, a young woman in a silk sari, wearing elegant earrings and armlets, sits engrossed in her own dream world (Figure 40). The rose in the background has been suggested as symbolising the pain and pleasure of love. It was shown at the annual exhibition of the Academy of Fine Arts in Calcutta in 1936 and was later to draw accolades at an exhibition of Portraits of Great Beauties of the World, held in California in 1952.

In socially conservative Bengal in the 1920s, it is hard to gauge people's true feelings about Mazumdar. Widely diffused in Bengali journals, his readership could not but have taken a guilty pleasure in beholding his paintings. Classical nudes, occurring on the same pages since the early 20th century, did not hold the same shocked fascination because of their cultural distance. Then there were the Bengal School's mannered, voluptuous two-dimensional semi nudes. The disturbing power of Mazumdar's women to lay in their palpability and immediacy: his subject an everyday village scene of a young woman returning home after her daily bath. For the puritanical urban middle class, the convincing image of a respectable housewife this portrayed furnished simultaneously discomfort and frisson. A contemporary critic put it well: at a time when women were behind purdah, it was daring to represent someone from a respectable middle-class, someone unapproachable in real life. Thus the beholder experienced the illicit thrill of spying on a 'respectable' housewife, the proverbial girl next door. The artist's tantalising silence about the identity of the model heightened the mystery surrounding her.[8] It is this ambiguity that made such a powerful appeal to the Bengali middle class.

7 - Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India*, 195 and Pl. XVII.
8 - Mitter, *Triumph of Modernism*, 138-140.

Hemen Mazumdar. The last romantic

Caterina Corni

The eternal feminine

"Human discernment, here is passed by, Woman Eternal, draw us on high"[1]. Woman eternal, or the eternal feminine is the translation of the powerfully expressive term Ewigweibliche invented by Wolfgang Goethe. The full power of women is embodied in the term "Ewig" (eternal), drawing on high, giving birth to man in the heavens, delivering him outside time. In any traditional and authentic religious or philosophical Form, the feminine principle is firstly shown as a symbolic potentiality or matter[2], that is then characterized in actuality as a lover or a mother. From the Islamic treatise The Ring of the Dove, to the Divine Comedy, or the Kama sutra (which is only seemingly moralistically distant), the absolute feminine is mysterious passiveness and the essential vehicle of palingenesis. The timeless Woman is a force that cannot be overlooked, which shakes, attracts, destroys and reconstructs. She naturally binds the "male" to "bring it back" to the place where their most authentic natures have always been a single, magnificent unit with two faces. The feminine "wakes up" the "dormant" spirit and shows it its most authentic nature and dignity.

It is easy to understand why it should be the female who are considered to be the mystery, the vehicle for, and the place of, transformation from the "male" (the first state and stage of the mystical process) to the final state that summarizes and integrates the two sexes: the absolute human being which was described as "requie adeptus est" (all the rest is achieved).

Mokhsa, the salvation or "liberation" from the captivity of Illusion, is also achieved through Kama (Love) in two ways: a direct and an indirect one. The four great paths to salvation in so-called Hinduism, or, more correctly Sanathana-dharma (eternal-Norm), are: Dharma, Artha, Yoga and Kama. The steady man, he who enjoys a balance where all natural logics have equal dignity and can conform to summum bonum, is the one that pursues his duties (artha) and cultivates his truest dignitas. In this man the natural dimension finds a place and thrives, which leads to the achievement of good karma that might set him free. In this way he might reach the true soul of Yoga[3], that which Patanjali defined as citta-vritti nirodhah (suppression of the fluctuations of the mind[4]). The four Purushartha taken into consideration here actually allow full existence, the generous mother that supports every form of life.

The feminine role of mediation between the human and the divine has been recognized in different ways: there are powerful symbolic elements that associate the Holy spirit or the Mother of Jesus with the Palaeolithic Venus, with Prajnaparamita (the perfection of transcendent wisdom) or with Tara in Tibetan and Mahāyāna Buddhism. The passive element peculiar to all these theomorphizations can always be traced back to the force that performs the fundamental roles of lover/mother and "assistant"/nurturer of the spirit. That force is thus necessarily taken on and surpassed in the same way that that which is divine surpasses that which is other than itself in the final reabsorption experience.

The feminine is Reality and that which we would like to be reality is often a simple dream where man is at once the theatre, the actor and the plot outline.

The Goddess

The studies conducted by the renowned Lithuanian archaeologist Marija Gimbutas (1921-1994) highlight the complex religious symbolism of ancient peoples, where the female form reflects the centrality of women in cultural and religious life. Gimbutas was able to outline the salient features of the symbolic structure of Old Europe through a determined and tireless work of classification and codification, and thanks to an interdisciplinary approach of her own creation which brought together linguistics, comparative religious studies, mythology, the study of historical documents and folklore. The great parthenogenetic creator goddess, which self-generates, is central to this civilization where the celebration of life is a dominant motif. The images of very feminine goddesses, both with anthropomorphic and zoomorphic features, demonstrate that they were a sacred part of the great natural cycles of fertility, birth, death and regeneration.

"Marija Gimbutas has not only prepared a fundamental glossary of pictorial keys to the mythology of the otherwise undocumented era of European prehistory, but has established the main themes of a religion in veneration both of the universe as a living body of Goddess-Mother Creatrix and of all the living things within it as partaking in her divinity."[5]

THE LAST ROMANTIC

The female figure conceived by Hemen Mazumdar enshrines the meaning and the symbolism of the eternal feminine. Women become the sole and profound source of inspiration. What emerges is a figure which is developed in both its earthly and sacred dimensions. A sort of eternal and primordial Female, a primitive Śhakti, a Unique Force, the source from which everything originated.[6] Mazumdar builds his women giving them an almost sculptural grandeur, the figurative space is developed vertically and the artist creates figures filled with expressive power, frozen in small, typically feminine gesture, which gives them a composed sensuality with a sense of the eternal.

His women take on the solidity of a Doric column, underlined by the rigor with which the supporting lines fall vertically, only interrupted by the fluid movement of the folds of cloth, in dense and delicate pleats, and by the small movements that undermine the precision of the vertical axis: hands that come together to adjust the cloth, or a foot extending forward (Figure 14). In his referencing of Hellenistic iconography, the Bengali master seems to wants to evoke the traditional Greek idea of kalòs kai aghatòs (beautiful and good). The young woman is in the bloom of femininity, but

1 - See Chorus mysticus, in Faust, Part One, J. W. von Goethe (Author), David Luke (Translator) Oxford World's Classics, 1987
2 - Matter, in the Platonic and Aristotelian sense, is pure and indistinct power (Saint Thomas also states that it is distinguished by quantity), and therefore suitable for receiving a form.
3 - From the Sanskrit root–yuj which indicates union, con-junc-tion (from the Latin jungo).
4 - See Yoga Sutra of Patanjali, Samadhi pada, 2.
This is an essential condition for all traditional forms. Buddhism indicates a number of important pages (appamada). This state was given particular consideration by Simone Weil, perhaps also for an oriental inspiration, who considered it as fundamental attention to mystical rebirth.

5 - The language of the goddess: unearthing the hidden symbols of western civilization, Marija Gimbutas, Harper, 1991
6 - See: Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, Heinrich Robert Zimmer, Princeton University Press, 1972

she also possesses the mature awareness of woman and mother. A reference to (indeed almost a quotation of) the renowned Indian photographer Shapoor N. Bhedwar. The balanced compositions of the photographer merge the theatrical dimension, evident in the composition of the scenes, with the strong sculptural presence of the figures and the painterly component that is highlighted through the rendering of chiaroscuro.

That female gesture that breaks the sober solidity of the structure is a recurrent theme in numerous works. In "Blue Swari" (Figure 22), the ideal compactness of the cylindrical shape of the body is broken by three movements that contribute to making the entire figure elegant and sinuous, giving the female figure the eroticism that characterizes Mazumdar's entire production. The extraordinary intensity and geometric rigor of the painting merges with the interplay of positive and negative space and a balanced harmony of volumes. The woman's arm breaks the vertical line and in the act of covering her head reveals the two-fold intention of the artist: to portray eternal femininity, where sensuality and modesty come together. His figures do not only inhabit space, they create it, as if space and form were one. Hence the artist's predilection for monochromes and rarefied backgrounds, which welcome the feminine body - almost embracing it - and make it immortal. Soft lines and elegant volumes emerge through the shifting transitions of colour in the complexion, which almost seems to come to life and breathe. A tribute, perhaps, to the great Flemish painter Pieter Paul Rubens, who celebrated the majesty of the female body, exalting it precisely in its voluptuousness.

He created that voluptuousness through the colour of the skin, which consequently assumes a powerfully expressive value. In pursuing the exaltation of the senses, Rubens constantly tried to recreate the sensation of touch as well. In Passing Cloud (Figure 38), the attention is focused on the gesture of the woman holding the sari slipping down her chest: the viewer can almost feel the softness of the fabric that envelops a body that looks as soft as butter.

The overflowing contours of the limbs achieve the same results as tightly fitting drapery would, and colour successfully shapes the luminous complexion, revealing the sublime feminine beauty. The composition of the painting, and in particular that graceful gesture, recall the "Venus Italica" by Antonio Canova, one of the finest examples of the return to classicism. The goddess is depicted as she emerges from the water, drying her body with a cloth draped around her hips, partially concealing her nudity. Her gaze, with the turning of her head, is directed to the side, perhaps hinting at the presence of someone watching the scene. The very human and instinctively modest pose has won the attention of many admirers, including the Italian poet Ugo Foscolo, who expressed passionate and enthusiastic admiration for the "beautiful woman" revealed behind the likeness of the goddess. There is a perfect balance between the divine and earthly dimension in Hemen Mazumdar's works, which emerges from a very personal poetic vision that creates a new and singular aesthetic. A painter of great culture, Mazumdar is gifted with the great ability of constructing a clear, simple beauty that lifts the sensuality of the female figure to the highest levels.

Mazumdar models these bodies without any hardness or imprecision. In Untitled, (Figure 21) the central figure is a nude seen from behind, in an extremely sober and essential scene. The drape that can be seen on the right helps to define an intimate and contained environment. The woman is indifferent to the prying eyes of the viewer, displaying her smooth and polished nudity. The gaze, guided by an unbroken line, rises from the orange cloth resting on her legs to the spiral of hair tied up with a hairpin at the centre, which become the focus of attention. This highlights the essential aspects of Mazumdar's language: the beauty of the female body, the taste for details, the attention to a rounded and abstract line, which cuts and isolates the forms. What emerges is a clear reference to the "Valpinçon Bather" (Figure 19) by the great neoclassical painter Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, who assiduously sought formal perfection. A bold, non-conformist and anti-academic work, the "Valpinçon Bather" embodies all the elegance and harmony of a femininity that is pleased to feel observed and admired. It also brings to mind "Le Violon d'Ingres" (Figure 20), one of the most celebrated works of Man Ray. The photograph of the bare back of the beautiful model Kiki de Montparnasse is the incarnation of eroticism. A genuine statue of flesh. Kiki is sitting on what appears to be the edge of a bed covered with checked fabric. Her arms and legs are crossed in front of her and cannot be seen. All that can be seen of her body is the curvature of the shoulders and the profile of the hips, draped with a second piece of fabric that forms a kind of crown framing the soft buttocks. The photograph is lit from the right and illuminates the woman's back almost uniformly, highlighting the whiteness of her body, that stands out from the much darker background. The model's face is turned three-quarters to the left, giving only a glimpse of her profile and a hanging earring. In portraits of women looking into a mirror they are always seen from behind, and the mirrors often do not reflect their image. The presence of the mirror in literature and visual art has its roots in ancient Greece, and continues into the twentieth century in the psychoanalytical work of Freud and Lacan, for example. They developed different studies on the subject, conceiving the creation of the double, also a symptom of narcissism[7]. In Lacan's theory of "The Mirror Stage"[8] we can understand the meaning the psychoanalyst attributes to the reflected image. This defines the point in which the ego[9], self knowledge and the construction of the subject is generated.

There is therefore an identification of the ego and a recognition that leads to the split between the real subject and its idealised image. The use of the mirror creates a contrast between the eye and the gaze, between seeing and understanding, between exteriority and interiority in its different

7 - In psychoanalysis this term indicates the feeling of love towards the image of oneself, derived from the myth of Narcissus. The pathology was studied by H. Ellis in 1898 and P. Nacke in 1899. This subject was later investigated by H. Kohut, O. Kernberg and S. Freud in the first half of the twentieth century (see: On Narcissism: An Introduction, S. FREUD, Yale University Press, 1991).

8 - In 1936 Lacan presented the paper "The Mirror State" at a congress of the International Psycho-analytic Association, held in Marienband. In this he described the fundamental phase of infant psychic development that takes place between six and eighteen months. Lacan refers to the fact that the child recognizes its identity by identifying its image reflected in the mirror. The psychoanalyst considered "the Mirror State" to be a fundamental part of the construction of the subject, which is created from the outside through the mirror and intellectually through the image of others. This was an almost entirely oral presentation, but a part was published in 1966 and later in a collection of his presentations (see: Ecrits: A Selection, J. LACAN, Routledge Classics, 2001). His works have been of great importance both for psychoanalysis and for the critical study of many works of art from different periods.

9 - In psychoanalysis the ego is one of the three agents in the psychic apparatus alongside the id and the superego. The ego is accountable for the relationship with reality and is influenced by social factors. (see: The Ego and the Id, S. Freud, Norton, 1989)

aspects of psyche, mind and spirituality. It is understandable, therefore, that in the context of art, the theme of the mirror, combined with the creation of a double, is presented as a key to understanding the state of mind, and as a form from which the individual can start to seek to understand and discover something more about themselves. The mirror represents the attempt to define one's personality, which cannot be understood because it is elusive and indefinable, existing between a public and an inner image. Standing in front of a mirror means looking for a point of mediation between the different levels of the psyche, identifying a new balance between imposed rules and the innermost personality. There are many representations of the theme throughout the history of modern art, including the Rokeby Venus (Figure 33) by the Baroque painter Diego Velázquez. The painting is inspired by Roman mythology, and shows Venus lying languidly on a bed. Cupid is in front of her handing her a mirror. The goddess is completely naked, but show from the back to abide by the Spanish inquisitions of the period. Her face is completely hidden, except for a delicate but abundant profile, while the reflection in the mirror that Cupid holds lets us see the details of her face that are not in shadow.

There is a distinct contrast between the colours, from the warm tones of the upper part to the cold tones of the lower part. The densely and energetically applied colour of the grey-blue sheets, the carmine red curtains and the background further highlight the soft complexion of the goddess. The work "Image" (Figure 7) enchants with the charm of an image that appears timeless. There is no trace of affectation in the portrait of a young woman caught in a moment of intimacy, unaware of the viewer as if she was being surreptitiously spied on. It is as if a Venus of classical sculpture had stepped down into everyday reality, becoming a modern woman. The simplicity of the composition, the sharpness of the contours, the transitions of warm colours in the complexion and the shimmering of the sari draped softly around the waist, enhance the idea of sacred sensuality. In this serene and silent daily intimacy lies all the charm of the painting, capable of presenting a female image of pure nudity and beauty.

The Original Copy

Sona Datta

The subject of copying in art is neither new nor simple.[1] It remains pervasive in contemporary culture yet subject to legal restrictions and societal taboos that continually imply it is morally or ethically subversive. In today's capitalist economies, Platonic mimesis is fully entangled with modern memes and Western art is forever debating the charged space between the *original* and the *copy*, especially with reference to fine art and its collectors, its forgeries and the monetary value of the all-powerful and 'original', work of art.

There was a time when *to publish* signified making an original text available for scholars to copy, a process that would enable students to engage fully with the material. So a book that was *not* copied was one that would probably be lost to humanity. The world of cultural production is thus embedded with multitudes of copies that are amount to more than mere imitations.

When Andy Warhol declared his role in the drama of western modernism, his creative appropriations elevated artistic copy to a pivotal role in the contemporary zeitgeist. The centrality of copying in the human creative project remains present and undeniable.

Historically, there have been many arguments about what constitutes great art. In India, as in Europe since the Renaissance, artists were trained by copying the work of others. However, it was of course the Renaissance that also demanded the artist achieve recognition as an innovator, and not merely as an imitator.

Western art's uniqueness has thus been predicated on the notion that it cannot be reproduced. In both traditional and contemporary art, originality conferred upon the object an aura of the sacred simultaneously transforming the museum into a sanctum.

In pre-capitalist society works of art were part of a system of collective labour, namely the *guild* or *karkhana* with artisans or *karigars*. This form of cultural production involved a particular kind of patronage, one in which value was calculated on the basis of materials used rather than on skill alone.[2] The modern post-industrial art market disrupted the guild system and the artist now faced the market armed only with his skill which was hall-marked by his signature.[3]

The core ambition of the British art curriculum in colonial India was 'to teach *them* (the Indians) one thing, which through all the preceding ages they have never learnt, namely drawing objects correctly, whether figures, landscape or architecture'.[4] For Richard Temple and others in the landscape of nineteenth century colonial India, drawing meant the exact copying of old masters, and the imitation of reality with precision and

1 - Boon. M, In Praise of Copying, Cambridge, 2010.
2 - 1. M. Baxandell, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy*, Oxford, 1972: 5-8.
3 - R. Chatterjee, 'The Original Jamini Roy': A Study in the Consumerism of Art, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Jan., 1987: 3-18.
4 - Richard Temple, *Oriental Experience* (1883), p.485 cited in Mathur, India By Design, p. 94

exactitude. While the Indian artist may have been described as proficient in deploying ornament and design, he was also perceived as lacking the requisite 'scientific' skills to produce mimetic copies of nature.[5] But the point missed here was that Indian art had never really concerned itself with reality. Why would it, when one had reality in multitudes all around one? Fundamentally, Indian art had always been about the *landscape of the imagination*.

Slavish copying in the colonial art schools was perhaps best exemplified in John Griffiths' twelve-year project at Ajanta while he was principal of the JJ School of Art in Bombay. For more than a decade, Griffiths engaged his students to produce meticulous copies of the great murals found within the caves at Ajanta.[6] However, some of his students refused to participate believing the task would stifle their creativity. Indeed, Pestonji Bomnaji, who would become one of India's most famed oil painters, would deny in later life that he had ever worked at Ajanta.[7]

The early twentieth century in India, and especially in Bengal, saw the revivalism of the Bengal School centred around Abanindranath Tagore and the 'culture-castle' of the Tagores at Jorasankho in North Calcutta pitted against a growing popularity of academic realism best exemplified by artists such as Jamini Gangooly and Hemendranath Mazumdar.

Following the upheaval around Curzon's first Partition of Bengal in 1905, Percy Brown's replacement of Havell as principal of the Government College of Arts in Kolkata enabled the reintroduction of academic naturalism into the school's curriculum. Mazumdar, Jamini Roy and Atul Bose went on to establish the *Indian Academy*, a convivial forum that debated the big questions of the day, namely whether 'the pursuit of naturalism in art was tantamount to a betrayal of national ideals and whether the historicism of the Bengal school was the sole path to India's artistic revival'.[8]

Theorist Homi Bhabha's focus on the space between 'mockery and mimicry' and its role in revealing 'colonial ambivalence' has been deeply influential in discussions around cultural representation, becoming a bedrock in discussion of post-colonial criticism.[9]

While Jamini Roy would eventually reject both academic realism and the artistic objectives of the Bengal School, Mazumdar would remain fiercely and vocally opposed to orientalism until his dying day asserting instead the universal nature of academic art. Thus, by 1921, Mazumdar's prodigious output had created an entirely new genre of figure painting in India, one that delighted in the sensuous, almost sexualised, qualities of the female flesh of the unattainable upper class elite Bengali woman. Mazumdar's Bengali woman clad in a 'wet sari' became his signature style, and fed the repressed and hungry desires of the Bengali middle classes who stood as much by a sense of received English prudery as by a revulsion that rendered them incapable of appreciating India's own rich traditions of erotic temple art.

Jamini Roy, on the other hand, successfully drew on multiple sources from his own

5 - Saloni Mathur, *India by Design*, 2007: 93-4
6 - John Griffiths, Report on the Work of Copying the Paintings of the Ajanta Caves (London 1872-85).
7 - Mitter, Art and Nationalism in Colonial India, p.54
8 - Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism*, p.129
9 - Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, New York, 1994.

childhood and cultural oeuvre, transforming the language of Bengali folk art into the modernist project of picture making ad deploying his works across the mantlepieces of metropolitan Kolkata.

While the Western classical nude would remain alien to the Indian eye, a work such as Mazumdar's *Dilli ka Laddu* or the 'Obscure Object of Desire' depicted a Bengali lady so familiar she could belong in everyone's family: Mazumdar thus placed sexual frisson almost within reach and became one of the few Indian artists of the early twentieth century to reap both financial and critical reward for his painting.[10] His depictions of women salute the continuity of an unbroken tradition that actually stretches back two millenia to the fecund Indian tree spirit or *Yakshi*, exemplified by the famous sandstone figure from the 1st century in the British Museum's collection.[11]

'Jamini Roy signifies not just the advent of modern art in India, but the advent of the modern Indian artist. There is a special relationship between the identities of 'modern' and 'Indian' which is uniquely tied to the historical moment. Jamini Roy's painting was modern because he created a new and distinct style and it was Indian because of its 'technique and conception'.[12]

And despite their variant practices, both Jamini Roy and Hemen Mazumdar would repeat many of their most popular works in different sizes and media. Indian art and philosophy has always had a clear sphere of application and so the pragmatist in each of them undoubtedly led them to surmise that this kind of production was also an opportune market-based response. Mazumdar was repeatedly requested by the maharajas of India's princely states to deliver them their own version of his most famous works alongside portraits of family members (the latter by definition were unique). Similarly, for Jamini Roy's buyers, such a request was clearly also a strategy to infiltrate the middle class home.

Vishaka Desai notes that in the 'modernist and historiographical bias in favour of 'original' creations by 'individual' artists…not much attention has been paid to understanding the nature of the more fundamental aspect of Indian painting: namely, the continuity of tradition and the process of using earlier works for the creation of new images".[13] Following the development of the Mughal atelier in the sixteenth century, a the names of a few key artists came to the fore and so the idea of a 'unique' work by an individual took root in a modest way within the Indian tradition. However, beyond discussions of stylistic connections and continuities, there has been no contextual discourse on the subject of copies that considers such important questions as the cultural and non-stylistic connections between the model and its copies, or in the function of copies in creating art works and their role as a definitive link to the past.[14] In this sense, copying could elevate a new work by giving it a secure link to the past. Indeed, Indian art is expanded through an ideological mechanism that acts by inclusion, producing different results each time. The singular characteristic of such a process is that the ancient returns in the modern reintroducing it in a different

10 - By 1921, he had won the prestigious gold medal for his painting *Reminiscence* at a Mumbai exhibition as well as the first prize at the Society of Fine Arts in Kolkata.
11 - Yakshi, 1st century sandstone, British Museum 1842,1210.1
12 - S. Datta, Urban Patua, 2010: 91
13 - V.N. Desai, 'Reflections of the Past in the Present: Copying Processes in Indian Painting" in Asher & Metcalf, eds. *Perceptions of South Asia's Visual Past*, p.135.
14 - For literature on the concept of copies, particularly with regard to postmodern scholarship in western art history, see Richard Shiff, "Representation, Copying and the Technique of Originality" in New Literary History. 15 (2 (Winter 1984), pp.331-363; and Rosalind Kraus (ed.), *Retaining the Originals Multiple Originals, Copes and Reproductions* (Washington 1989).

context, thus creating a 'connective tissue that nourishes Indian art as a whole'.[15]

Desai describes how much of pre-modern Indian painting was concerned with copying, following established models rather than a wholehearted and agonistic turn away from tradition. Thus, within the context of the Indian tradition, artists never set out to make exact replicas; but were simply working within a traditional framework of an established model, and making it current in a variety of ways. Thus in the Indian painting tradition, the most common form of the copying process involved uninterrupted referents to the past through a work's structure and composition, whereas details of clothing, furnishing and decoration served to bring the past up to the present within the same work. The intention, then, was not simply to reproduce the original but to create a continuity between the past and the present.[16]

Historically, Indian visual and musical arts shared a core structure that the individual practitioner then improvised upon, famously seen in musical ragas and their painted equivalents. Therein lay the scope and terrain for individuality. In this sense, creativity is viewed as a kind of improvisation rather than self-conscious expression. The individual calling for the artist-genius was thus not one that was visited upon artists in India before the twentieth century.

The traditional artist's practice was thus the product of a habitual practice. Apprentices patiently copy the gestures of the master until the techniques of their craft had been internalised.[17] This alone allowed them to secure deep knowledge about how the material behaved in the hands of the craftsman enabling them to develop a set of templates that could be adapted to different creative cues, thus creating work of aesthetic value despite limited conceptual knowledge.[18]

Colonisation had alienated Indians from traditional visual culture and so the reclamation of the folk, the craft and the subaltern became an integral part of the post-colonial project. At Santiniketan, Rabindranath Tagore introduced an arts curriculum driven by medieval and folk art and principles of utility. Tagore's was a *contextual modernism*, that is not a modernism borne of a continuity of style but one borne through a community of ideas.

In the modern period, Jamini Roy managed to harness two paradoxical standpoints: namely, the assimilation of a folk idiom from a continuous tradition with the idea of himself as the organisational source and master of the work – a unique individual with a distinctly personal style. Thus, for Roy, the Bengali vernacular was deeply embroiled in the nationalist fight for *swaraj*.[19]

As Partha Mitter so beautifully sums up, '*what the cognoscenti failed to grasp is Roy's radical critique of colonialism through his art. Through his own artistic objectives, this supreme individualist voluntarily returned to the anonymity of tradition*'.[20]

15 - P. Maiullari, "Jamini Roy and the Mimetic Origin of Indian Art" in C. Corni (ed.), *Jamini Roy, From Tradition to Modernity – the Kumar Collection*, Lugano 2015:52
16 - Desai, op.cit: 144.
17 - Farr, James R. 2008. *The Work of France: Labour and Culture in Early Modern Times, 1350-1800*. London: Rowman and Littlefield.
18 - Siva Kumar, R. 2006. "K.G. Subramanyan's Saras." In Sahmat Artists Alert, *Iconography Now. Rewriting Art History*. 86-90. Delhi: Sahmat.
19 - Datta, *Urban Patua*, 2010: 91.
20 - Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism*, 2007: 120.

"Presencing" in Mazumdar's Art

Venka Purushothaman

Artworks by their nature are not objective but records of their creation at a given point in time. As archives of history, they are sites of contestation and reverence; beauty and beguilement; and identities and gaze awaiting to provide contemporary culture an opportunity to posthumously re-right history and facilitate the emergence of new readings. Curating exhibitions around private and public collections provide, even for the rarefied of art, a request to pierce through layers of cultural memory. It is an important exercise to provide new contexts and histories to understanding the present. In this regard, even the most radical attempt to study the influence of early 20th century artist such as Hemendranath Mazumdar's (1894-1948) work on contemporary culture would naturally lead to the study of the learning environment he lived in, his methods of composition and, in variably, subject matter.

Mazumdar is a celebrated painter whose works remain desired by museums, galleries and collectors alike. It is not often that a body of work emerges for engagement with the public and this exhibition is a welcome opportunity for reflection and interrogation. Art history provides a critical framework for the consideration of the influence of European art academies' style, method and composition on Mazumdar's work and why it warrants to be collected and appreciated. That the works are weighted in the craft of colonial arts education and philosophy of the Indian tradition of painting - is worthy of significant deliberation to provide a pier into contemporary culture.

Colonial arts education in British India gave rise to various counterpoints. Whilst the British established arts schools in Madras, Bombay, Calcutta and Lahore as a civilizing force for the general population and development of decorative and applied arts, it gave rise to schools that fuelled aspirations and nationalisms. As studies have shown, artists were not mere purveyors of taught practices and formal pedagogies of their colonial arts education but rather they were aesthetically and critically engaged with their cultural practices and philosophies.[1]

Mazumdar's educational environment was heavily framed by the curriculum of European art academies or 'academic art' which were focussed on both a formalised rendering of the human body and an incisive study of socio-cultural realism. Art historian Geeta Kapur records that the emphasis in these curriculum on life-drawing, expressed through sketches and paintings, "formed the academic criteria for and against which subsequent movements in Indian art developed".[2] The formalism of academic art has undergone, over the decades, fierce critique from artists, art critics and art historians for espousing a romantic and glossed-over myth on everyday life divorced from the true grit of the human condition. However, in the second half of the twentieth century, academic art found a new

1 - See the scholarly writings of Mitter and Viswanathan for detailed analysis of this. Mitter, Partha. *Indian Art*. Oxford Art History Series. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002; Viswanathan, Gauri. *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.
2 - Kapur, Geeta. "A Stake in Modernity: Brief History of Contemporary Indian Art". In *Tradition and Change: Contemporary Art of Asia and the Pacific*, edited by Caroline Turner. Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1993, p.29.

lease through theoretical reconsideration of everyday life. Art was critically apprised outside of the normative formalist/modernist paradigm and located within daily ritualised/realist values of perspective. Academic art was reframed as a potential site of production and circulation of meanings. Where art history and criticism was unkind, art theory and cultural studies embraced. This provides the entry point for the contemporary appreciation of Mazumdar who like many artists of his period were not mere passive purveyors but critical respondents to the received formalism.[3]

European academic art's sensibility found its aesthetic ally in the works of Tranvancore's (now Kerala) Raja Ravi Varma (1848-1906) who brought an uncluttered, yet highly ornamentalised and embellished view of the 'Indian' in colonial India.[4] Through a powerful rendering of women in various socio-cultural narratives (village belle, goddess, seductress, musician, etc.) his works left an delible mark on the Indian cultural consciousness permeating through to contemporary culture and media (films, posters, TV serials). It defined how a pantheon of gods should be visually fabled out of dense written scriptures and gave gods a much-needed style guide. Ravi Varma's repetition of subject in various settings and an allegorisation of an orientalised ideal subsequently percolated to other artists. Artists were trained to allegorise the everyday and picturise an ideal in the most classical of form. Form, composition and perspective elicited a sombre formality and a distinctive pastel mood. For Mazumdar and his contemporaries, notably Jamini Roy, the human body/being was structurally central to the realism thereby lending to the creation of a fable – albeit flat and false.

Nudity, nakedness and the natural remain an integral study of the human condition in art. From ancient times till today, the human body remains a site of contestation, inscription, celebration and containment. Moreover, human body in art has, over the centuries, transformed from an objectified, medicalised body to a subjective, human body. Unlike the male nude, the female nude has had far reaching impact on art locating the female body within the construct of everyday life: The image of the nude allows for a historical and cultural 'presencing' of the individual: That is, the station or location of the being at a particular moment in time and history. Vast literature over the decades, propelled by critical and theoretical interventions, have adequately demonstrated that visual representation of the female figure does not give voice but can further seek to silence and subjugate. Objective attention can overwhelmingly suffocate.

Archaeologists, ethnographers and historians have long studied the presence of female nude sculptures in the Indian subcontinent since ancient times. Often featured in objective forms of universality, divinity, motherhood and personification of productivity as ancient terracotta and stone sculptures suggests, the transformation of the female figure into subjective forms of ownership (mother, wife, child) has clearly been an exercise of historical conquests, colonisation and modernity.[5] The critical understanding of this transformation is fundamental in appreciating the socio-cultural 'presencing' of the female 'being' in art. Be it life drawing, painting or sculpture, realism is laden with a definitive perspective of human station in life against mere aesthetics. The representation of Mazumdar art furthers this.

3 - Mitter, Partha. *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
4 - Ibid.
5 - See Sankalia, H. D. "The Nude Goddess or 'Shameless Woman' in Western Asia, India, and South-Eastern Asia". Artibus Asiae, vol. 23, no. 2, 1960, pp. 111–123.

The back of women's torso features significantly in Mazumdar works in 'presencing' a being. Through an optical operative of control, gaze, frame, theatricality and documentation, Mazumdar foregrounds the opportunity to further the literal figurative of Ravi Varma's women. *Neelambari* is one such work. Also, referenced as *Lady in Blue and Gold Sari* and *Blue Swari* (Figure 22), this oil on canvas work foregrounds a blue saree-clad woman walking whilst responding to windy elements. Unlike many of his works where the painter's gaze is on the feminine as demure-reflexive or -posed entity, this work documents the movement of a well-heeled woman walking away in the evening. The placement of the lotus on her blouse (which also appears in *Borno Jhankar* – Figure 47) may read, on one level, as a symbol of wealth (unlike the unbloused women) and, on another level, it could be read within an Indian system of the being in its presence: the chakra system. The symbol is located within the range of the Anahata chakra (heart). In the system, the chakra is signified by a lotus and elementally supported by air/wind (gust of wind as the woman attempts to cover herself) and representative of the possibilities of love, compassion and serenity. Here it seems that Ravi Varma's female goddess transfigures into the everyday in Mazumdar's women.

Mazumdar's significance to contemporary culture resides in the possibility of bridging the state of the human condition through presencing. That his model often, was his beloved wife[6] may have given him the courage to push the boundaries of that which was possible in life-drawing in a private space. But in being public, his body of works give a degree of historical continuity to shared identities and an appreciation of linear and repetitive processes in artworks of his era. Mazumdar, I would argue, has not been adequately considered by art historians unlike his contemporaries. However, collections provide viewers an insight into his artistic practices and supplement our appreciation of our contemporary condition.

6 - For a reference to this fact, see Datta, Meenakshi. "The Popular Art of Jamini Roy: Reminiscences." *India International Centre Quarterly*, vol. 17, no. 3/4, 1990, pp. 281–290.

The Look of Love: Desire & The National Imagination

Zehra Jumabhoy

Gauzes & Gazes

The *sari* hides a multitude of sins, we are told. Yet, there are situations in which it reveals more than it conceals. Think of Bollywood heroines from the 1950s onward, wearing sopping-wet *sari*s (drenched via a convenient downpour or helpfully positioned waterfall), who dance around a tree, hotly pursued by their manly, muscly wooers. The soaked *sari* allows us the hopeful hero to glimpse the object of his desire in all her fleshly glory – while observing the bounds of propriety, of course. Sex is suggested, even as it is denied an overt onscreen presence.

As film and folklore have it, we owe such cleverly stoked eroticism to the paintings of one Hemendranath Mazumdar (1894-1948). Born into a wealthy, landowning family in Gachihata, a village in Kishoreganj district (now Bangladesh), Mazumdar ran away from home to enrol in Calcutta's art school. He formed part of a group of painters, such as B.C. Law, Jogesh Seal and his childhood playmate, Atul Bose, who were dedicated to pursuing the scientific naturalism taught in Fine Art Academies in British India. Mazumdar and his circle vehemently opposed the hazily historical, myth-and-Mughal inspired paintings of the Bengal School of Art, spearheaded by English educator E.B. Havell – the principal of the Government College of Art, Calcutta, from 1896 – and his disciple, Abanindranath Tagore. The latter concocted an 'Indian style' of painting, whose flat figuration and soft-hues eschewed Academic Realism. Many of the Who's Who of Modern Indian art joined Havell and Tagore's ranks: Asit Kumar Haldar, Kshitindranath Majumdar, A.R. Chughtai and the early Nandalal Bose. Mazumdar was not one of them. He wrote vehement critiques of the nostalgic sentimentality enshrined by the Bengal Schoolers. Together with his chums (Atul Bose and the early Jamini Roy), Mazumdar adamantly espoused the merits of scientifically-rendered figuration, based on principles of perspective and chiaroscuro. As the self-styled champion of Academic Realism, he attended Ranada Gupta's Jubilee Academy of Art, which churned out most of the acclaimed naturalist painters of the day. He published the journal *Shilpi*, and in 1919 founded the Indian Academy of Fine Art, with Roy, Bose, Law and Seal, to extol the virtues of representational art.

Mazumdar's comely women dominated *Shilpi*, deliberately treading in the footsteps of previous photo-real painters, like Raja Ravi Varma (1848-1906). The latter's buxom goddesses made (and continue to make) regular appearances on prints, biscuit tins and packets of tea, sheathed in snugly-fitting saris (remember *Lakshmi* emerging from a giant pink lotus or *Saraswati* plucking a *veena*?). Mazumdar's painted women – look at the diaphanously-garbed villager in Figure 32 – are *also* closely related to the damp damsel enshrined by Ravi Varma's brother, Raja Raja Varma.[1] This less-acclaimed Raja Varma's *Water Carrier* (1894) partially reveals her curvaceous

1 - Partha Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism*: India's artists and the Avant-garde (1922-1947), Reaktion Books: London, 2007, p. 128

posterior as she meanders into a blue-green landscape, a pot balanced expertly on her head. The voyeuristic viewer has no idea what she 'really' looks like, but is free to give her the face of the woman of his dreams. Similarly, the protagonist of Mazumdar's Figure 57 – whose dark flesh is suggestively exposed beneath clingy cloth – is available and unattainable with titillating simultaneity. This purloined paradox allowed Mazumdar to avert allegations of pornography in conventional Calcutta, where he operated for many years. He claimed that his figures were ordinary upper-middle class Indian women who were usually decoratively dressed (however scantily). If they stirred up erotic fantasies, this was hardly their fault – their secretive expressions and refusal to gaze boldly back at onlookers were testament to their *chaste* charms. Such arguments convinced Mazumdar's patrons of the purity of their intensions – and that in devouring images of his fair folk, they were indulging their appetite for art (rather than female flesh). The strategy worked, since Mazumdar's women retained their ardent admirers throughout his lifetime. In 1921, Mazumdar's *Smriti* (a.k.a *Secret Memory*) won the Gold Medal at the Bombay Art Society's annual exhibition. (In fact, he bagged the first prize in Bombay for 4 years running.) His paintings were so much in demand that the Maharajas of Jaipur, Bikaner, Kashmir and Patiala (amongst others) queued up for the privilege of commissioning his damp damsels and lovelorn ladies. Think of *Rose or Thorn* – many variations of which were produced and one of whom can spied in Figure 40, where a maiden in a pinkish saree seems sad. But, princely accolades did not protect his bejewelled beauties from slights in the long-run: they are seldom treated with deference today. Giggled at as relics of the High Noon of Raj-era hypocrisy (where the erotic was dressed in the garb of the virginal) they are speedily dismissed from art historical consideration. This essay argues that we should give them the respect that they are due. Which begs the question: just how much *are* they due?

A seemingly obvious route to restoring Mazumdar's status would be to applaud his skills as a draughtsman. There is no doubt as we examine the perfectly arched back of the purple *sari*-ed woman in *Abhiman (Wounded Vanity)* – Figure 49 – that Mazumdar worked the conventions of naturalism to put on display much better formed figures (pun intended) than the Raja Varma brothers and many of their disciples. See how SG Thakur Singh's damp dame in *After the Bath* (Figure A) suffers in comparison to Figure 54? In Mazumdar's rendition, viewers enjoy the feeling of inhabiting the body on display – we can almost feel the heat of the scene, where the cloth is wet and cold, where it is dry...

Yet, technical prowess in academic painting has never been a method for gaining art historical acclaim in India. As art critic Ranjit Hoskote humorously points out in the wall-text for his 2018 exhibition, *The Sacred Everyday: Embracing the Risk of Difference*, at the Serendipity Arts Festival in Goa, even the great Raja Ravi Varma's realism has been consistently derided as kitschy. So, to argue that Mazumdar was a better naturalist than many of his peers and predecessors is unlikely to convince his critics. Instead, I suggest that Mazumdar's work needs to be considered afresh because it allows us to re-write tired narratives about the connection between art and nationalism. To do this we need to explore why Mazumdar has been side-lined in the first place.

We have to remember that when Mazumdar was producing his perfectly-proportioned damsels in the 1920s, another movement was dominating the discourse in art history: the aforementioned Bengal School. Set up in opposition to the Academic Realism taught in most British-run state institutions, the School has largely dominated dialogues of what was 'acceptably' Indian in art. Tagore and his pupils drew from South Asian traditions as well as Chinese and Japanese scroll paintings to create a 'Pan-Asian' aesthetic. Their images harked back to a golden age that pre-dated British colonialism. The School eschewed naturalism's fascination with the classical nude and 3-dimensionality, because they associated them with Imperialist notions of progress – the very same ones that they blamed for the arrogance of the British Raj. In this way, the Bengal School stood for *Swadeshi* (a.k.a Self-rule), championing 'Eastern' spiritualism over 'Western' materialism. Their medium was seen to be inseparable from their message. Since much-maligned naturalism was precisely the style that Mazumdar and *his* acolytes adopted, they were viciously castigated for being 'un-patriotic'.

Such criticisms die hard. Because 'Indian-style painting' churned out the heroes of Indian art history – in addition to Tagore, it lays claim to the later offerings of Jamini Roy and Nandalal Bose. Thus, the naturalism of Mazumdar (if it is mentioned at all), is treated as merely a footnote to the main story of Indian Modernism. Academic Realism has never made an aesthetic come-back – if Raja Ravi Varma's Gods and Goddesses were early proselytisers of Indian nationalism, their champions have remained generally in the field of anthropology – or made it quite clear that they are celebrating Ravi Varma's sociological rather than aesthetic merit. If the Father of Modern Indian art is so easily dismissed for his Realist style, what chance do his devotees have of evading ridicule? It comes as no surprise that they are accorded even less respect. The prevailing association of Mazumdar with the *sari*-clad protagonists of Bollywood erotica, has done nothing to rehabilitate his reputation. More so because this connection has meant that Mazumdar's females have come in for Feminist censure. Are not his demure, light-skinned damsels pandering to The Male Gaze?

Oh yes, Mazumdar's detractors argue, the Bengal School loved dreamy women. It is true that its 'Indian style' offerings presented Indian women as weak and meek; needing male protection (think of Chughtai's Mughal princesses mooning under trees) – yet, they *also* allowed India to take pride in its past grandeur. So even if Bengal School artists gave rise to a kind of looking that was both satisfying to the Male Voyeur and the exploitative Western one, such cheap thrills were mitigated because the School formulated a new national language. And hence, even when the Bengal School is castigated for its sentimental spiritualism by later artists – such as the Mother of Indian art Amrita Sher-Gil – it never completely lost credibility. Moreover, in recent years there has been an attempt to give the Bengal School 'another chance'. No such courtesy has been accorded to Mazumdar. In other words – even when the 'Indian style painting' of Tagore reached rock-bottom in terms of popularity, its bitter denigration of naturalism for being 'too Western' was still treated as Gospel. This seems unjust. It is time to gaze again at Mazumdar's buxom beauties.

Perhaps, their secretive smiles will reveal more about the interface between the Modern, the Colonial and the National than we have assumed?

Look Who's Talking...

Significantly, Mazumdar never saw himself as antagonistic to the push for *Swaraj* that was underway in the India the 1920s. When King George V's visit to India necessitated that those enrolled at the Calcutta art school create visual art to celebrate his arrival – Mazumdar decided to leave the school, and join the Jubilee Academy instead.[2] Nor did he think his choice of style disbarred him from being a participant in the struggle for freedom. Quite the contrary. He saw Academic Realism as a style that allowed for the exploration of Universal truths that *transcended* cultural boundaries. In using it, his art (based on rational, scientific principles) was worthy to be included in the universal community of man; where distinctions between Colonised and Coloniser no longer held water – since they now shared a common visual language. This is why Mazumdar disapproved of the Bengal School's nostalgic romanticism, which extolled historical victories instead of instigating new ones. Hence, to see Mazumdar's art as not 'properly' Indian is to miss the point.

Interestingly, the sceptical art historical reception Mazumdar has received over the years, recalls the more recent stones thrown at Bombay's Progressive Artists' Group (PAG). Formed in the immediate aftermath of Independence from British rule in 1947, the PAG attempted to position India as an equal player on the International scene – borrowing from local traditions as well as Euro-American ones to fabricate a consciously universal style. They saw themselves as Indian and International – and did not view this as a contradiction in terms. Yet, "for more than fifteen years" the PAG was "the favourite whipping boy for art professors, newspaper reviewers and columnists . . . he was pronounced Western, rootless . . . imitative and sterile," laments artist Gieve Patel.[3] So, the cold-shouldering of Mazumdar is related to an ongoing dilemma: how much and what can Modern Indian art appropriate from the 'West' without being accused of being derivative, imitative and un-Indian? Partha Mitter explains that Modern Indian art during the Raj was trapped in an even worse double-bind: if it was too skilfully rendered it was seen as a mere Western copy, if it was too stylistically different it was relegated to the being labelled Craft.[4]

Yet, Mazumdar saw Academic Realism as a tool to address universal themes: Love, Desire, Longing – and, inevitably, Death. He thought Realism allowed India to enter the modern era, the soft romanticism of his dreaming maidens off-set by the dexterity of their depiction. Science was linked to Art, and both were uplifted by the association. Hence, in a typical Victorian flourish, Mazumdar saw himself as exploring Truth with a capital T. In Just After Bath a comely lady – the personification of Youth and Beauty sits on a bed (which resembles a tomb) sadly holding an eerie, pearly-white skull. The painting is naturalist but its significance is allegorical; related to the tradition of Vanitas painting that flourished in the Netherlands in the 17th century, it muses on the ephemerality of life, the transience of worldly pleasure and mortality. These themes were also passionately explored by the Pre-Raphaelites, Pictorialist photographers and the Aesthetic Movement more generally in Victorian Britain. Focusing on Just After Bath

2 - Mitter, *The Triumph of Modernism*, p. 128
3 - Gieve Patel, "To Pick Up a Brush," *Contemporary Indian Art*, Exh. Cat., Grey Art Gallery: New York, 1985, p. 10
4 - Mitter, Triumph of Modernism, p. 25-26

exposes the hybrid heritage of Mazumdar's women. Glowing with gold and flowing fabric, they bring to mind the moony, flower-bedecked damsels who feature in Lawrence Alma-Tadema's *The Roses of Heliogabalus* (1888) and Albert Joseph Moore's *Midsummer* (1897). If Mazumdar's beauties wear *saris* that recall Greco-Roman couture; Moore and Alma-Tadema's fair maidens sport togas that mimic saris. *Midsummer*'s protagonist, in sensuous saffron robes, slumbers is a carved wooden chair festooned with marigolds – the self-same flower which plays the lead role in many Hindu fertility rituals. Is she dreaming of the 'Exotic, Erotic East'? In echoing such Orientalist fantasies Mazumdar's art proclaims its right to a multicultural inheritance. Thus, Colonial and Coloniser, unwittingly or otherwise, unveil the cross-pollination at the heart of Empire.

A Motherly Minx

Cultural theorist Sumathi Ramaswamy provides a clue as to how Mazumdar's female protagonists might share more in common with those of the Bengal School than they have been given credit for. Their beauty contains a serious significance. According to Ramaswamy from the 19th to the 20th centuries an "exceptional female figure", both human and divine, starts to appear in various forms (comely, dangerous, young and old) in a host of visual media: calendar and bazaar art, posters, books, newspaper cartoons, films and maps.[5] She is *Bharat Mata* (Mother India). For Ramaswamy, the best evidence of how visual culture formed an ideological counterpart to nationalist Freedom Fighters is to be found by examining the way India's unofficial mapmakers channelled the spirit of Mother India. Ramaswamy's description of the 1937 chromolithograph *Vande Matharam* (*I Worship Thee Mother*), in which Mother India is clad in the national flag, is telling: "The contours of her body sketch out the mapped outline of India, as her tri-colour *sari* … billows out to claim the territorial spaces of the emergent nation." Ramaswamy notes, that in these maps' "enchanted cartography" the geo-body is usually characterized in a particular way by mapmakers, who are, after all, often male, upper-caste Hindus: Mother is usually "a Hindu/Indian woman whose body is demurely clad in a *sari*" with all the markers of "traditional authenticity".[6]

If prints and calendar art supported the rise of a freely reigning upper-caste Hindu female, in the guise of Mother India, then so did Modern Indian art in the early 20th century. Abanindranath Tagore's faithfulness to such iconography is undisputed: he did after all create the quintessential image of *Bharat Mother* shortly after the turn of the century. Fair and lovely Tagore's female form is clad in a diaphanous saffron *sari*, Figure B. Nandalal Bose's white-and-saffron-wearing offering – thanks to its soft-focus figuration – is always lauded for following in Tagore's *Mata*'s illustrious footsteps (Figure C). Bose benefits from the association, as it assures him a place in art history as the natural heir to Tagore's nationalist figuration. Unfortunately, Mazumdar's contribution to the dialogue is ignored because of his supposedly unpatriotic penchant for Academic Realism. Yet, the naturalist *pujarani* in Figure D and the (admittedly) Tagore-esque one in Figure E both demonstrate a similar visualisation of the nation as a comely woman – devout, demure and draped in a spreading *sari*. And just like Tagore's rendering, Mazumdar's dames gesture subtly to ideas of national *territory*.

5 - Sumathi Ramaswamy, "Maps, Mother Goddesses and Martyrdom in Modern India", *Empires of Vision: A Reader*, Martin Jay & Sumathi Ramaswamy (Eds.), Duke University Press: Durham, 2014, p. 424
6 - *Ibid.*, p. 428

Tagore's *Mother India* stands on a globe, as does one of Mazumdar's maidens. Mazumdar, then, is just as in step as Tagore and Bose with Ramaswamy's myth-inspired mapmakers. It could be argued that Mazumdar's *pujaranis* follows their lead *even* more devoutly than Bose's virginal lady. After all, in Figures D & E the body of the nation is conjoined to the female form; in both paintings the devotee's ample figure traces the outlines of a map of British India. Ironically, it is the Academic Realist version of the *pujarani* which gestures most obviously to India's 'sacred geography': the smoke from the *dia* she holds billows up to delineate the contours of the Subcontinent. Significantly, art historian Gayatri Sinha reminds us that Modern Indian art is often inspired by Hindu Puranic thought, in which "the land is possessed by a divinity – usually a goddess – and is a manifestation that coheres with her body.[7] The *Puranas* fuse territory with the idea of the primal *mother*land, a divine goddess, and this image was the "precedent" for the "identification of the goddess with the holy *Bharat* or India during the nationalist period".[8] Mazumdar's *pujarani*s are walking this well-worn path.

Of course, these days, conflating Indian-ness with the body of a Hindu Goddess is unlikely to win Mazumdar any popularity contests. The spectre of Mother India has been attacked by Feminists and Liberals alike. The former complain bitterly that imagining the nation in the guise of a woman – and that too a desirable, well-endowed one – relegates the female citizen to being mere 'property'; to being conquered and dominated by the Macho Male. Meanwhile, Liberals fear that Mother India is an inherently divisive symbol – one which smacks of the Hindu Right's upper-caste, communalist ethos. After all, theorist Gyanendra Pandey has famously argued that when the Right's idea of *Hindu Rashtra* (Hindu Nation) came into political currency in the 1920s, it was joined to the cause of Mother India.[9] Pandey traces this seminal conflation to the militant nationalist reformer Swami Shraddhanand's 1924 pamphlet, *Hindu Sanghathan* (*Saviour of the Dying Race*), in which Shraddhanand advocated worshiping the Mother spirit in three guises: *Gau Mata* (Mother Cow), Mother *Saraswati* (the Hindu Goddess of Learning) and Mother Earth. Is this the territory that Mazumdar, Bose and Tagore's females *inevitably* lead up to – however well-meaning their creators may have been at the time? It is true that in all four paintings – Figures B, C, D & E – the female protagonists are light-skinned Hindu women. But, does that make them *inherently* exclusive? Do Mazumdar's women point us in the direction of other, less elite, routes to nationalism?

After all, even as they appear to cement stereotypes about submissive, upper-class females (notice the gold bangles on the freshly-bathed village women), Mazumdar's protagonists hold something back. We often catch them gazing at themselves in reflective surfaces – mirrors, rivers, gleaming vessels – and yet, generally speaking (despite the crystal-clear Realism with which they are delineated), their reflected selves remain curiously elusive. This is especially true of Figure 6, whose luminous, softly-curved back convinces us of her beauty. Nevertheless, the mirror in which she looks reveals nothing. In contrast, SK Thakur Singh's mirror-gazer (Figure F) is happy to make eye-contact us, albeit in reflected form. Perhaps, this is because Mazumdar is a man of his times: when his heroines first began

7 - Gayatri Sinha, "Cartographic Necessities", *InFlux: Contemporary Art in Asia*, Parul Dave Mukherji, Naman P. Ahuja and Kavita Singh (Eds.), Sage publications: New Delhi, 2013, p. 49-5
8 - *Ibid.*, p. 50
9 - Gyanendra Pandey, "Which of Us Are Hindus?," *Hindus and Others: The Question of Identity in India Today*, Gyanendra Pandey (Ed.), Viking: New Delhi, 1993, p. 238-272

to be feted in pre-Independence India, the shape Indian identity was to assume was just as hidden as their visages. If the body of the nation was symbolised by the female form, in the 1920s it was still unclear what she would 'really' look like.

The culpability of Mother India for post-Independence dilemmas is being hotly debated in India today and would require yet another essay to explicate. In the meantime, though, we can come to one conclusion at least: Mazumdar's beautiful, secretive women bring us – however unwittingly – to the doorstep of a dozen dilemmas; to the paradoxes and problems that beset the 'idea of India'. And so, it would be foolish to ignore them anymore.

Images

1 Figure A. SG Thakur Singh. *After the Bath*. 1923.

2 Figure B. Abanindranath Tagore. *Untitled* (*Bharat Mata*). C. 1903.

3 Figure C. Nandalal Bose.

4 Figure D. Hemen Mazumdar. *Untitled* (*Pujarani*)

5 Figure E. SG Thakur Singh. *Untitled* (*Lady Gazing in the Mirror*)

6 Figure F. Hemen Mazumdar. Divine Moment

Fig. A

Fig. B

Fig. C

Fig. D

Fig. E

Fig. F

The journey of a collector

Nirmalya Kumar

I never set out to have an art collection. Initially, not even knowing what I liked, it was only after almost a decade of acquiring art that one could observe a definite pattern. This revelation of the unconscious preferences in historical purchases combined with educating myself on the history of Indian modern art, directed my collection over the subsequent two decades. I still acquired what I liked, but it was increasingly in pursuit of a relatively specific, yet evolving vision. Now, I am privileged to be living with the artists, Hemen Mazumdar, Jamini Roy, and Rabindranath Tagore, each of whom haunts one of my apartments: Singapore, London, and Calcutta respectively. This is the story of the lessons that I learnt about collecting art during my journey.

Strategy is choice

As a management professor, I teach "strategy is choice". One can make these choices randomly, opportunistically, instinctively, or consistent with a plan that is driven by a vision. Only the last can be called a strategy, because then the choices are premeditated, discriminating, and consistent with the destination one is attempting to reach. Great companies are built on the back of a strategy that combines a bold audacious vision, a dream, with an excellent plan that is well executed. Of course, any strategy must allow for flexibility, both in the vision and the plan, as the environment changes and new opportunities arise.

Unlike companies, people acquiring art usually do not have a strategy. They buy randomly and instinctively whatever strikes their fancy. But, buying each work of art is a "choice". There is a big difference between buying art and assembling a collection. The former is a random collection of works, each perhaps interesting in its individual right, but unconnected to the others. The latter is a purpose driven effort. It is conscious, deliberate, as well as knowledge intensive and directed. As a result, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

The big idea in collecting is to "limit yourself" because only then can the collection become something. Acquiring each work of art requires both falling in love and deep reflection. Does this piece add to make the collection a more meaningful grouping? How does it fit with the plan of buying multiple works over time? What is missing in the collection? It is this injection of intelligence combined with an "eye" that helps make each piece more valuable because of its provenance and the company it keeps with the other art in the collection. It is against the background of these questions that one falls in love or "allows" oneself to fall in love with a work of art being considered for potential acquisition.

Collecting requires research

A collector must educate themselves about what they are collecting. My regret is the lack of formal training in art history. However, being an academic helped. I devoured books on art and befriended leading experts of Indian art to accelerate my learning. Still, I remained eclectic by not relying on any one of the experts. Instead, the objective was to build a knowledge base that would be associated with a unique expertise. This research aspect enamoured me as much as the visual appeal of the art.

In contrast to western art (or pre-1900 Indian art), the academic research on modern Indian art is relatively shallow. As far as I know, there are no examples of academics devoting an entire lifetime to researching a single Indian modern artist. The Indian art galleries and auction houses deal with too many artists to have more than superficial knowledge into anyone beyond the top selling half a dozen artists. As a result, through focus and continuous learning, an individual can become an expert on a particular modern Indian artist.

My love affair with Indian paintings began with Jamini Roy. This led me to focus on the emergence on Indian modern art that occurred between 1900-1950. I was fascinated by how my hometown Calcutta was the cradle of this struggle to achieve cultural independence from British and Western hegemony. To keep learning and enhancing my visual vocabulary, I became a frequent visitor of museums, fairs and galleries, regardless of the type of paintings on display. The goal was to understand art in order to make connections between what you see and what you know. This helps assess art on its own merit, against the history of those who have come before. What is unique and what is derivative?

The editor of this book, Caterina Corni, once told me to go and view Picasso's Guernica at the Prado in Madrid. After absorbing the initial thunderbolt of Picasso's imagination, I saw the familiar M.F. Husain horse floating around the top left of the painting. OMG! Yes, Caterina gently informed me this is Picasso in 1937!

To be an informed collector, one must engage with art history as encapsulated by the collector, Alian Servais: "one of the trends in my collection is the constant conversation with art history, because when you look with connoisseurship you can find people who are completely forgotten, disregarded, or underestimated…you recognize the people who played a significant part in that history… and these people don't carry the prices they should."

It was relatively late, around 2003, that I learnt the concept of provenance. Since then, everything acquired has meticulous documentation. I wish I had known earlier that without this, any painting, especially from the period in focus, lacks validity. Furthermore, given the harshness of Indian conditions, the mediocre quality of materials often employed, and poor preservation, the paintings of these artists have deteriorated more than necessary. They require tender love and care against the decades of grime, insect activity and fungus accumulation. One must not hesitate to spend relatively significant proportion of the acquisition costs on restoration, preservation, and framing. The payoff in terms of transformation of the impact of the paintings is remarkable as the figures below demonstrate.

Collecting requires finding a "voice"

It was a blessing to be a professor with relatively limited funds as it forced me to focus. Combined with an understanding of Indian

modern art's origins, I funnelled my resources to where I could make a difference - among the overlooked, under-priced and ignored. Within what the gallerists, auction houses and wealthy buyers sneeringly referred to as the "Old Bengal School", I saw three artists redefining Indian art with a revolutionary push towards modernism against western conceptions of art as so brilliantly articulated by Partha Mitter, another contributor to this volume. Jamini, Hemen, and Rabindranath, on one hand rejected the colonization of the mind, and on the other, the dead end of adopting centuries old conservative orientalism led by AbanindranathTagore school (which included Gaganendranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose).

After a decade of primarily acquiring Jamini Roy paintings, and becoming known in art circles as a "Jamini" collector, it became increasingly difficult to find Jamini pieces available that could enhance the existing collection. However, in the process, I learnt more about two of Jamini's contemporaries, Rabindranath Tagore and Hemen Mazumdar, who were the "unJamini". In greater appreciation of the direction that they had taken in opposition to Jamini Roy's conception of Indian modern art, Hemen and Rabindranath Tagore works increasingly dominated later acquisitions.

Unlike with contemporary art, where there is a market to be "made", the old masters is a clean market. With no one possessing substantial inventory of the masters, the motivation to manipulate the market is non-existent. And, the buyers of contemporary art have been burned. Ask those who bought Subodh Gupta during 2006-08 for a million dollars and now are unable to offload them for a tenth of the price. There is always more inventory coming on the market. If the artist does not evolve, the new stock that appears on the market looks just like the previous works. This leads to a collapse in prices.

When I started collecting, I was astounded that one could "buy" an original Rabindranath Tagore painting, forget that it was available at throwaway prices. Similarly, when bidding up prices of Jamini, I was advised by experts that I was paying too much. In hindsight, from a strict financial perspective they were correct. But, I was thinking this is the most important artist in the history of modern Indian art, how come other people don't see it? Even today, Hemen's paintings have minimal trade as only a couple appear in the auctions every year. As sellers sought and offered me the best works of these three artists, I felt fortunate to be a lonely collector of them.

When you collect what the "few" think should be, the result is more likely to be a unique collection. In contrast, a strategy of simply snapping up the most expensive works or buying the cover lots of the auctions leads to the art in the collections becoming repetitive and boring. The distinctiveness is lost as the crowd mimics each other.

I wish all my fellow collectors to be bold, immune to fashion, freethinking and compulsive. One must have the confidence to go against the accepted fashion or the flavour of the day. But, it is precisely this quality that makes it an unlikely wealth creation strategy. Of the three artists, perhaps only Rabindranath Tagore has risen in value to outstrip inflation. But then that was never the objective. You must get pleasure from the object even if, and when, they are out of fashion.

Conclusion

It was providence that I was brought up in Calcutta, surrounded by arts and strong women. Inadvertently, this shaped my taste in art as it uniquely represents my own narrative. I collected for the opportunity to have contact with beauty, with genius, and with history. Unlike the investor, striver, or decorator, it is for the innate pleasure of seeing the art every day, not for reasons of investment, to prove to others that you have arrived, or to decorate the walls.

Most important to me is what do I feel when I stand in front of a painting and how vividly do I recall it when I shut my eyes. Beyond, the historical importance, the collection strategy, above all, the art must linger in my head. Even after all these years, whenever I enter my London apartment after an absence of a couple of months, I hold my breath for a second and go wow!

Finally, Hemen Mazumdar, Jamini Roy, and Rabindranath Tagore are towering figures of Indian modern art. One does not really own their works. Instead, they should be shared as widely as possible via loans to exhibitions and an open house for those interested in viewing them. Being among the largest private collections of these three artists brings a responsibility as a custodian to this art. It is in this role, I am proud to be part of this book.

BEFORE RESTORATION

AFTER RESTORATION

BEFORE RESTORATION

AFTER RESTORATION

BEFORE RESTORATION

AFTER RESTORATION

NOTES ON WORKS

Fig. 1
Detail from Ear-Ring
oil on canvas
60.5x45.7 cm

Fig. 2
Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg
A nude woman doing her hair before a mirror
1841
oil on canvas
33,5x26 cm

Fig. 3
Ear-Ring
oil on canvas
60.5x45.7 cm
signed bottom right

Published:
- Another version entitled Kaner-Dul (Ear-Ring), dated 1930s, oil on canvas (58.4x33 cm) sold at Prinseps on 24 October 2018 as Lot #25.
- Another version untitled, in the collection of National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) Delhi, watercolour on paper (52x42 cm). Also published as Sojja Samapan (Toilet)/Kaner Dul (Earring), page 57 of Anuradha Ghosh, Hemendranath Mazumdar (Rajya Charukala Parshad, Government of West Bengal 2016).
- Another version entitled Ear Ring, oil on canvas (49x34 cm), page 93 of Art of Bengal 1850-1950, a catalogue for exhibition organised by Calcutta Metropolitan Festival of Art to celebrate 50th year of India's Independence (Calcutta: 1997).
- Another version untitled, cover image of Ujjwal K. Majumdar Editor, Chhabir Chasma by Hemendranath Mazumdar (Ananda Publishers Private Ltd. 1991).
- Another version entitled Ear-Ring, unpaginated of P. Shome & C.P. Ray, Editors, The Art of Mr. H. Mazumdar, Volume I-V (The Indian Academy of Art, 24 Beadon Street, Calcutta, 1920-24).

Fig. 4
Ear-Ring
watercolour on paper
37x25 cm
signed bottom right

Published:
Same of Figure 3

Fig. 5
Detail from Ear-Ring
watercolour on paper
37x25 cm

Fig. 6
Untitled
watercolour on paper
40x28.5 cm
signed bottom right

Fig. 7
Image
oil on canvas
86.4x60.3 cm
signed bottom right

Published:
- Another version entitled Rup (Image), oil on canvas, page 83 of Anuradha Ghosh, Hemendranath Mazumdar (Rajya Charukala Parshad, Government of West Bengal 2016).
- Another version untitled, dated 1920s, oil on canvas (107.3x60.9 cm) sold at Pundoles on 3 September 2013 as Lot #42.
- Another version entitled Roop, unpaginated between pages 32-33 of Baridbaran Ghosh, Chitrashilpi Hemen Mazumdar (Calcutta: Ananda 1993).
- Another version untitled, unpaginated between pages 32-33 of Ujjwal K. Majumdar Editor, Chhabir Chasma by Hemendranath Mazumdar (Ananda Publishers Private Ltd. 1991).
- Another version entitled Image, unpaginated of P. Shome & C.P. Ray, Editors, The Art of Mr. H. Mazumdar, Volume I-V (The Indian Academy of Art, 24 Beadon Street, Calcutta, 1920-24).

Fig. 8/10
Details from Image
oil on canvas
86.4x60.3 cm

Fig. 9
Antonio Canova
Detail from Pauline Bonaparte as Venus Victrix (or Venus Victorious)
white marble
1805/8

Fig. 11
Flora (Chloris)
marble
1st - 2nd century AD

Fig. 12
Untitled
watercolour on paper
37.5x25.7 cm
signed bottom right

Published:
- Another version untitled, oil on canvas (122.2x61.2 cm) sold on 27 August 2012 at Pundoles as Lot 53.

Fig. 13
Detail from Untitled Figure 14
oil on canvas
90.5x60.6 cm

Fig. 14
Untitled
oil on canvas
90.5x60.6 cm
signed bottom right

Published:
Same of Figure 12

Fig. 15
Spirit of Maidenhood
watercolour on paper
32.5x23.3 cm
signed bottom right

Published:
- Another version entitled Manas Kamal (Spirit of Maidenhood), page 86 of Anuradha Ghosh, Hemendranath Mazumdar (Rajya Charukala Parshad, Government of West Bengal 2016).
- Another version entitled Manas Kamal, oil on canvas (122x61 cm) sold on 20 September 2000 at Christies as Lot 267 and was resold again on 19 March 2009 at Christies as Lot 1042 and again on 17 September 2015 at Christies as Lot 725.
- Another version entitled Manas Kamal, oil on board (121.6x60.9 cm) sold on 15 December 2011 at Osians as Lot 62.
- Another version entitled Spirit of Maidenhood, unpaginated of P. Shome & C.P. Ray, Editors, The Art of Mr. H. Mazumdar, Volume I-V (The Indian Academy of Art, 24 Beadon Street, Calcutta, 1920-24).

Fig. 16
Spirit of Maidenhood
oil on canvas
89.5x55.5 cm
signed bottom right

Published:
Same of Figure 15

Fig. 17
Detail from Daydream
oil on canvas
115.5x84.7 cm

Fig. 18
Daydream
oil on canvas
115.5x84.7 cm
signed bottom right

Published:
- Another version entitled Dibaswapna (The Daydream), watercolour, page 72 of Anuradha Ghosh, Hemendranath Mazumdar (Rajya Charukala Parshad, Government of West Bengal 2016).
- Another version untitled, oil on canvas (75.5x59.7 cm) sold at Sothebys on 19 March 2012 as Lot #22.
- Another version entitled Dibaswapna, unpaginated between pages 32-33 of Baridbaran Ghosh, Chitrashilpi Hemen Mazumdar (Calcutta: Ananda 1993).
- Another version entitled Day-dream, unpaginated of P. Shome & C.P. Ray, Editors, The Art of Mr. H. Mazumdar, Volume I-V (The Indian Academy of Art, 24 Beadon Street, Calcutta, 1920-24).

Fig. 19
Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres
The Valpinçon Bather
1808
oil on canvas
146×97.5 cm

Fig. 20
Man Ray
Ingres's Violin
1924
gelatin silver print
29.6x22.7 cm

Fig. 21
Untitled
watercolour on paper
36x25.5 cm
signed bottom right

Fig. 22
Blue Swari
oil on canvas
81x49.3 cm
signed bottom left

Published:
- Another version entitled Neelambari (In Blue Sari), oil on canvas, page 67 of Anuradha Ghosh, Hemendranath Mazumdar (Rajya Charukala Parshad, Government of West Bengal 2016).
- Another version, oil on canvas laid on board (76.2x52 cm) sold at Art Bull New Delhi on 21 November 2012 as Lot #3.
- Another version entitled Woman in Blue Sari, oil on canvas (76x45 cm) at Sothebys on 8 June 2012 as Lot #20.
- Another version entitled Lady in Blue and Gold Sari, oil on canvas (121.9x66 cm) sold at Christies on 5 October 1999 as Lot #45.
- Another version entitled Neelambari, unpaginated between pages 32-33 of Baridbaran Ghosh, Chitrashilpi Hemen Mazumdar (Calcutta: Ananda 1993).
- Another version entitled The Blue Swari, unpaginated of P. Shome & C.P. Ray, Editors, The Art of Mr. H. Mazumdar, Volume I-V (The Indian Academy of Art, 24 Beadon Street, Calcutta, 1920-24).

Fig. 23
Detail from Blue Swari
oil on canvas
81x49.3 cm

Fig. 24
The First Sight
oil on canvas
96x142.6 cm
signed bottom right

Published:
- Another version entitled Alekha Darshan (First Light), watercolour, page 97 of Anuradha Ghosh, Hemendranath Mazumdar (Rajya Charukala Parshad, Government of West Bengal 2016).
- Another version entitled The First Sight, unpaginated of P. Shome & C.P. Ray, Editors, The Art of Mr. H. Mazumdar, Volume I-V (The Indian Academy of Art, 24 Beadon Street, Calcutta, 1920-24).

Fig. 25
Glamour of Beauty
oil on canvas
60.6x45.8 cm
signed bottom right

Published:
- Another two versions entitled Glamour of Beauty (Ruper Moho), oil on canvas, pages 98 & 99 (from collection of Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Kolkata) of Anuradha Ghosh, Hemendranath Mazumdar (Rajya Charukala Parshad, Government of West Bengal 2016).
- Another version untitled, watercolour on paper (15.4x24.6 cm) sold at Osians 29 October 2009 as Lot #46.

- Another version untitled, oil on canvas (51x43.5 cm) sold at Osians on 15 October 2004 as Lot #23.
- Another version entitled Ruper Moho, unpaginated between pages 32-33 of Baridbaran Ghosh, Chitrashilpi Hemen Mazumdar (Calcutta: Ananda 1993).
- Another version untitled, unpaginated between pages 32-33 of Ujjwal K. Majumdar Editor, Chhabir Chasma by Hemendranath Mazumdar (Ananda Publishers Private Ltd. 1991).
- Another version entitled Glamour of Beauty, unpaginated of P. Shome & C.P. Ray, Editors, The Art of Mr. H. Mazumdar, Volume I-V (The Indian Academy of Art, 24 Beadon Street, Calcutta, 1920-24).

Fig. 26
Detail from Glamour of Beauty
oil on canvas
60.6x45.8 cm

Fig. 27
Detail from Finishing Touch
oil on canvas
108.5x72 cm

Fig. 28
Finishing Touch
oil on canvas
108.5x72 cm
signed bottom left

Published:
- Another version entitled Sreshtho Shobha (The Best Beauty), page 93 of Anuradha Ghosh, Hemendranath Mazumdar (Rajya Charukala Parshad, Government of West Bengal 2016).
- Another version entitled Alta, unpaginated between pages 16-17 of Baridbaran Ghosh, Chitrashilpi Hemen Mazumdar (Calcutta: Ananda 1993).
- Another version entitled Finishing Touch, unpaginated of P. Shome & C.P. Ray, Editors, The Art of Mr. H. Mazumdar, Volume I-V (The Indian Academy of Art, 24 Beadon Street, Calcutta, 1920-24).

Fig. 29
Shilpi
oil on canvas
74.5x53.3 cm
signed bottom right

Published:
- Another version entitled Shilpi, watercolour, page 100 of Anuradha Ghosh, Hemendranath Mazumdar (Rajya Charukala Parshad, Government of West Bengal 2016).
- Another version entitled Shilpi, oil on canvas (122x61.5 cm) sold at Christies on 20 September 2000 as Lot#268 and was resold again at Christies on 21 March 2007 as Lot #6.

- Another version entitled Shilpi, unpaginated between pages 10-11 of Shilpi (published by The Indian Academy of Art, 62-5 Beadon Street Calcutta in 1929). There were also 5 figures on two pages, unpaginated between pages 8-9, demonstrating the stages of making this painting that accompanying an essay by Hemen Mazumdar entitled "Making of a Picture".
- Another version entitled Shilpi, unpaginated of P. Shome & C.P. Ray, Editors, The Art of Mr. H. Mazumdar, Volume I-V (The Indian Academy of Art, 24 Beadon Street, Calcutta, 1920-24).

Fig. 30
Detail from Shilpi
oil on canvas
74.5x53.3 cm

Fig. 31
Untitled
oil on canvas
91x61.5 cm
signed bottom right

Published:
- Another version untitled, oil on board (127.6x50.8 cm) sold on 18 December 2016 at Christies as Lot 158.

Fig. 32
Pallipran
oil on canvas
90.3x61.5 cm
signed bottom right

Published:
- Another version entitled Pallipran (Village Love), page 53 of Anuradha Ghosh, Hemendranath Mazumdar (Rajya Charukala Parshad, Government of West Bengal 2016).
- Another version entitled Pallipran, oil on canvas, page 134 of Partha Mitter, The Triumph of Modernism (Reaktion Books, 2007).
- Another version entitled Bhig Kapud, oil on canvas (91.4x63.5 cm) sold on 19 September 2002 at Christies as Lot 271.
- Another version entitled Woman in Wet Saree, oil on canvas (71x43.5 cm) sold on 16 June 1999 at Bonhams as Lot 7
- Another version entitled Pallipran, unpaginated between pages 32-33 of Baridbaran Ghosh, Chitrashilpi Hemen Mazumdar (Calcutta: Ananda 1993).
- Another version entitled Pallipran, A. M. T. Acharya, Editor, Indian Masters (Calcutta: Lakshmibilas Press 1921).
- Another version entitled Siktavasana, dated 1915, oil, page 64 of Ashoke Bhattacharya, Calcutta Paintings (West Bengal Government 1991).
- Another version untitled, unpaginated of P. Shome & C.P. Ray, Editors, The Art of Mr. H. Mazumdar, Volume I-V (The Indian Academy of Art, 24 Beadon Street, Calcutta, 1920-24).

Fig. 33
Diego Velázquez
The Rokeby Venus
1647/51
oil on canvas
122x177 cm

Fig. 34
Untitled
1936
ink on paper
20x31.7 cm
signed bottom right

Fig. 35
Untitled
oil on canvas
33.3x43.2 cm
signed bottom left

Fig. 36
Detail from Memories Terrible of a Nude Women
ink on paper
23x19 cm

Fig. 37
Memories Terrible of a Nude Women
ink on paper
23x19 cm
signed and inscribed in English, signed twice more

Fig. 38
Passing Cloud
oil on canvas
90.7x60.6 cm
signed bottom right

Published:
- Another version untitled in the collection of National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) Delhi, watercolour and tempera on paper (117x63.5 cm). Also published as Saram (passing cloud) on cover and page 51 (oil on canvas) as well as another version on page 50 (watercolour) of Anuradha Ghosh, Hemendranath Mazumdar (Rajya Charukala Parshad, Government of West Bengal 2016).
- Another version untitled, pencil and watercolour on canvas (46.5x31 cm) sold on 14 July 2005 at Sothebys as Lot 1.

- Another version entitled Passing Cloud, unpaginated of P. Shome & C.P. Ray, Editors, The Art of Mr. H. Mazumdar, Volume I-V (The Indian Academy of Art, 24 Beadon Street, Calcutta, 1920-24).

Fig. 39
Detail from Passing Cloud
oil on canvas
90.7x60.6 cm

Fig. 40
Rose or Thorn?
oil on canvas
61x50.7 cm
signed bottom left

Published:
- Another version untitled, page 158 of Anuradha Ghosh, Hemendranath Mazumdar (Rajya Charukala Parshad, Government of West Bengal 2016).
- Another version entitled Rose or Thorn, watercolour on paper, page 137 of Partha Mitter, The Triumph of Modernism (Reaktion Books, 2007).
- Another version entitled Rose or Thorn, watercolour on paper (66x44.5 cm) sold at Bowrings New Delhi on 4 November 2001 as Lot #18.
- Another version entitled Lady, watercolour, page 42 of Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath, Movement in Indian Art exhibition catalogue, 30 December 1997 to 31 January 1998.

Fig. 41
Dilli ka Laddu
crayon on paper
20.8x15.4 cm
signed bottom right

Published:
- Another version untitled, page 45 of Anuradha Ghosh, Hemendranath Mazumdar (Rajya Charukala Parshad, Government of West Bengal 2016).
- Another version entitled Dilli ka Laddu, watercolour, page 136 of Partha Mitter, The Triumph of Modernism (Reaktion Books, 2007).
- Another version entitled Bengali Lady, (87x48.5 cm), page 124 of Art of Bengal: Past and Present 1850-2000 (Kolkata: CIMA 2000).
- Another version untitled, watercolour on paper (86x48 cm), pages 24-93 of Art of Bengal 1850-1950, a catalogue for exhibition organised by Calcutta Metropolitan Festival of Art to celebrate 50th year of India's Independence (Calcutta: 1997).

Fig. 42
Dilli ka Laddu
watercolour on paper
36x25 cm
signed bottom right

Published:
Same of Figure 41

Fig. 43
Dilli ka Laddu
oil on canvas
79x49.2 cm
signed bottom right

Published:
Same of Figure 41

Fig. 44
Detail from Untitled Figure 45
oil on canvas
155x114 cm

Fig. 45
Untitled
oil on canvas
155x114 cm
unsigned

Fig. 46
Detail from Harmony
oil on canvas
79.4x59.2 cm

Fig. 47
Harmony
oil on canvas
79.4x59.2 cm
signed bottom right

Published:
- Another version entitled Borno Jhankar (Harmony), oil on canvas page 75 of Anuradha Ghosh, Hemendranath Mazumdar (Rajya Charukala Parshad, Government of West Bengal 2016).

Fig. 48
Detail from Wounded Vanity
oil on canvas
86x60.4 cm

Fig. 49
Wounded Vanity
oil on canvas
86x60.4 cm
signed bottom right

Published:
- Another version entitled Abhiman (Wounded Vanity), oil on canvas (82.5x42.2 cm) sold at Christies on 12 June 2018 as Lot #7.
- Another version entitled Abhiman (Wounded Vanity), oil on canvas page 58 of Anuradha Ghosh, Hemendranath Mazumdar (Rajya Charukala Parshad, Government of West Bengal 2016).
- Another version entitled Abhiman (Wounded Vanity), oil on canvas (76x45 cm) sold at Sothebys on 16 June 2009 as Lot #34.
- Another version, oil on canvas laid on board (115.5x59 cm) sold at Bonhams on 12 June 2001 as Lot #21.
- Another version entitled Wounded Vanity, unpaginated of P. Shome & C.P. Ray, Editors, The Art of Mr. H. Mazumdar, Volume I-V (The Indian Academy of Art, 24 Beadon Street, Calcutta, 1920-24).

Fig. 50
Detail from In Expectation
oil on canvas
114x75.5 cm

Fig. 51
In Expectation
oil on canvas
114x75.5 cm
signed bottom right

Published:
- Another two versions entitled Pratiksha (The Expectation), oil on canvas page 46 and watercolour page 47 of Anuradha Ghosh, Hemendranath Mazumdar (Rajya Charukala Parshad, Government of West Bengal 2016).
- Another version entitled In Expectation, unpaginated of P. Shome & C.P. Ray, Editors, The Art of Mr. H. Mazumdar, Volume I-V (The Indian Academy of Art, 24 Beadon Street, Calcutta, 1920-24).

Fig. 52
The Goal
oil on canvas
71.8x50.2 cm
signed bottom left

Published:
- Another version entitled Parinam (The Goal), page 70 of Anuradha Ghosh, Hemendranath Mazumdar (Rajya Charukala Parshad, Government of West Bengal 2016).

- Another version entitled Parinam, unpaginated between pages 32-33 of Baridbaran Ghosh, Chitrashilpi Hemen Mazumdar (Calcutta: Ananda 1993).
- Another version entitled The Goal, unpaginated of P. Shome & C.P. Ray, Editors, The Art of Mr. H. Mazumdar, Volume I-V (The Indian Academy of Art, 24 Beadon Street, Calcutta, 1920-24).

Fig. 53
Untitled
oil on canvas
102x61 cm
unsigned

Fig. 54
The Lost Heart
oil on canvas
90x65.2 cm
signed bottom right

Published:
- Another two versions entitled The Lost Heart (Tanmoy), oil on canvas page 73 and partial detail page 161 of Anuradha Ghosh, Hemendranath Mazumdar (Rajya Charukala Parshad, Government of West Bengal 2016).
- Another version entitled Village Girl, watercolour on paper (64.1x34 cm) sold on 16 September 1999 at Sothebys as Lot 195.
- Another version entitled Tanmoy, unpaginated between pages 32-33 of Baridbaran Ghosh, Chitrashilpi Hemen Mazumdar (Calcutta: Ananda 1993).
- Another version unpaginated, between pages 32-33 of Ujjwal K. Majumdar Editor, Chhabir Chasma by Hemendranath Mazumdar (Ananda Publishers Private Ltd. 1991).
- Another version entitled The Lost Heart, unpaginated of P. Shome & C.P. Ray, Editors, The Art of Mr. H. Mazumdar, Volume I-V (The Indian Academy of Art, 24 Beadon Street, Calcutta, 1920-24).

Fig. 55
Detail from The Lost Heart
oil on canvas
90x65.2 cm

Fig. 56
Untitled
oil on canvas
90.5x61 cm
signed bottom right

Published:
- Another version untitled, oil on canvas (117.5x57.2 cm) sold on 3 November 2015 at Pundoles as Lot 37.

Fig. 57
Monsoon
watercolour on paper
25.5x36.7 cm
signed bottom right

Published:
- Another version entitled Monsoon (Barsha), page 130 of Anuradha Ghosh, Hemendranath Mazumdar (Rajya Charukala Parshad, Government of West Bengal 2016).
- Another version entitled Varsha (Monsoon), watercolour (36.5x49.9 cm) sold at Osians on 15 December 2011 as Lot 58.
- Another version entitled Barsha, immediately preceding page 1 of journal Shilpi (published by The Indian Academy of Art, 62-5 Beadon Street Calcutta in 1929).

Fig. 58
Monsoon
oil on canvas
109.2x155.4 cm
signed bottom right

Published:
Same of Figure 57

Fig. 59
Memory
watercolour on paper
33.5x27.3 cm
signed bottom right

Published:
- Another version entitled Smriti (Memory), page 76 of Anuradha Ghosh, Hemendranath Mazumdar (Rajya Charukala Parshad, Government of West Bengal 2016).
- Another version entitled Smriti (secret memory), oil on canvas (73.5x58.5 cm) sold at Bonhams on 8 April 2014 as Lot #355
- Another version entitled Portrait of a Lady, oil on canvas (76.8x63.8 cm) sold at Christies on 17 October 2001 as Lot #212.
- Another version entitled Smriti, unpaginated between pages 32-33 of Baridbaran Ghosh, Chitrashilpi Hemen Mazumdar (Calcutta: Ananda 1993).
- Another version untitled, unpaginated between pages 32-33 of Ujjwal K. Majumdar Editor, Chhabir Chasma by Hemendranath Mazumdar (Ananda Publishers Private Ltd. 1991).
- Another version entitled Secret Memory, unpaginated of P. Shome & C.P. Ray, Editors, The Art of Mr. H. Mazumdar, Volume I-V (The Indian Academy of Art, 24 Beadon Street, Calcutta, 1920-24).
- A version of this painting won the gold medal at the annual exhibition of the Bombay Art Society in 1920.

Fig. 60
Untitled
watercolour on paper
31x23 cm
signed bottom right

Fig. 61
Detail from Untitled Figure 62
oil on canvas
78x57 cm

Fig. 62
Untitled
oil on canvas
78x57 cm
signed bottom right

Published:
- Another version entitled Lady Playing the Sitar, oil on canvas (60.5x50.5 cm) sold at Osians on 19 June 2015 as Lot #29.
- Another version entitled Music, oil on paper laid on board (72x46 cm) sold at Christies on 17 October 2001 as Lot #211.
- Another version entitled Music, oil on canvas (49.5x39 cm), page 123 of Art of Bengal: Past and Present 1850-2000 (Kolkata: CIMA 2000).

Fig. 63
Untitled
watercolour on paper
31x20 cm
signed bottom left

Notes:
1 The titles are only provided when either Hemen Mazumdar entitled a painting or a title appeared in a publication in his lifetime. In general, we selected the English titles as translated in the respective publications.
2 This list is based on our research to the extent that information was available to us at time of publication. Hemen Mazumdar paintings were widely published in magazines and as posters, most of which were not available.
3 Hemen Mazumdar, as is stated in his article “Making of a Picture” painted several versions of the same image. There were often small differences between them in details, medium or size. We have considered these as “another version” in our list above.

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Author biographies

Caterina Corni has a master's degree in Art History and Criticism from the Università Statale di Milano, her thesis was about the contemporary Indian artist Subodh Gupta. She began her career by cooperating with the journal "Flash Art". At the same time she worked as curator, and organized temporary exhibitions in Europe, the United States, the United Arab Emirates and in India. Since 2004, her interests have turned in particular to modern and contemporary Indian art and to the study of the relationships and interactions between Western and Oriental art. She has edited the catalogues for several monographs and collective exhibitions. In 2014, her project on the relationship between Indian artist Jivya Soma Mashe and Israeli artist Michal Rovner, was selected by the Centre Pompidou (Paris) for the XXV anniversary of the exhibition "Magiciens de la Terre". Caterina Corni is an Associate Professor of Art History at Symbiosis University, Pune.

Sona Datta is an art historian and cultural collaborator who until recently was Head of South Asian art at the Peabody Essex Museum in Massachusetts where she extended the museum's world-renowned modern Indian collections to include the best contemporary art referencing all of South Asia. Sona previously worked at the British Museum for 8 years where her exhibitions included the flagship Voices of Bengal season (2006), which attracted more people of South Asian extraction than any project in the British Museum's history. Sona also radically redefined the British Museum's engagement with modern collecting through the acquisition of contemporary art from Pakistan that linked to the Museum's holdings of historic Mughal painting. In 2015, she wrote and presented BBC4's Treasures of the Indus, described as an 'adventure with engaging historical and cultural material and lifting the veil on the region's past showing you must know where you have been to know where you are going'.
Sona graduated with a First from King's College, Cambridge University and was awarded the prestigious Rylands Prize for Excellence in the History of Art. Her new book is a radical revision of South Asian art that will reset the lens on the so-called 'East'. She lives in London with her husband, two boys (and no dog).

Zehra Jumabhoy is a UK-based writer, speaker and art historian. She was the Steven and Elena Heinz Scholar at the Courtauld Institute of Art, London, where she completed her doctorate and is an Associate Lecturer, specializing in modern and contemporary South Asian art. In addition, she co-organizes Contemporaneity in South Asian Art, a public seminar series at the Courtauld's Research Forum. She has been editor of the Visual Art section for Time Out Mumbai and an editor at the journal ART India. Her book, The Empire Strikes Back: Indian Art Today, was published by Random House, London, in 2010. She is the Guest Curator of The Progressive Revolution: Modern art for a New India (14 September 2018-20 January 2019), which was inspired by her Phd at the Courtauld on the intersection of Indian art and nationalism.

Nirmalya Kumar is Lee Kong Chian Professor of Marketing at Singapore Management University and Distinguished Fellow at INSEAD Emerging Markets Institute. He has previously taught at Harvard Business School, IMD (Switzerland), London Business School and Northwestern University. Between 2013-16, as strategy head for the $100 billion Tata group, Nirmalya reported to Chairman Cyrus Mistry. An author of several articles and eight books, he has been included in Thinkers50 (the biannual listing of the top 50 management thinkers), 50 Best B-school Professors and 50 Most Influential Business School Professors in the world. As a consultant, he has worked with more than 50 Fortune 500 companies in 60 different countries as well as served on many prestigious boards of directors. Nirmalya's art collection is focused on the Bengal School from the first half of the 20thCentury.He actively supports museum exhibitions and publications through his art collection and served on the South AsianAcquisition Committee of Tate Modern. In recognition of his patronage of South Asian Art, he was awarded an Honorary Fellowship by the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London in 2012.

Partha Mitter, Hon. D. Lit. (London University); Emeritus Professor, Sussex University; Member, Wolfson College, Oxford; Honorary Fellow, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Fellowships: Clare Hall, Cambridge; Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton; Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; Clark Art Institute Williamstown (Mass); National Gallery of Art, Washington DC. Publications: Much Maligned Monsters: History of European Reactions to Indian Art (Oxford 1977); Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922 (Cambridge, 1994); The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947 (Reaktion Books, 2007).

Venka Purushothaman is an award-winning art writer, academic with a distinguished career in arts and cultural industries in Singapore. Currently Provost at LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore, he holds a PhD in Cultural Policy and Asian Cultural Studies from The University of Melbourne. Venka has researched and published extensively on contemporary art, cultural policy and festival cultures. His books on culture, Making Visible the Invisible: Three Decades of the Singapore Arts Festival (2007), and Narratives: Notes on a Cultural Journey, Cultural Medallion Recipients, 1979-2002 (2002) remain the most comprehensive study of the festivals and artistic practices in Singapore. As an art writer, Venka has written essays on numerous artists including Pierre & Gilles (France), Nathalie Junod Ponsard (France), Parvati Nayar (India) and Salleh Japar (Singapore). His artist monograph, The Art of Sukumar Bose: Reflections on South and Southeast Asia (2013) was awarded the ICAS Book Prize 2015 (Best Art Book Accolade) by the International Convention of Asian Scholars, Leiden University. He is currently editor of Issue, an annual international art journal, published in Singapore, which curates essays, exhibitions and interviews by artists, scholars and curators. Venka is a member of the Association Internationale des Critiques d'Art, France, (AICA Singapore) and Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts, UK.

Acknowledgments

Collections
The paintings for the exhibition were borrowed from collections based in the following countries:
- Belgium
- India (Goa, Kolkata, and Mumbai)
- Singapore
- Switzerland
- United Kingdom
- United States
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